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kidscreen®

About reaching children through entertainment

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OF TVs AND MEDIA MUTATIONS

The irony of the situation occurred to me just as I was lugging my giant old cathode ray-sporting television set down to my storage locker. You see, I had finally purchased a shiny (like really shiny, I believe they call it "piano finish" black) HDTV set, and realized I was putting the still-working dinosaur to rest in the same month consumer media outlets had declared HD's days were numbered. Admittedly, I'm not what you'd call an early adopter. I'm more than happy to let others blaze that path, but it seemed disheartening to think that in just a few short years I would toss my new toy aside for a 3-D model. Or at least that's what manufacturers and media outlets were prognosticating coming out of the Consumer Electronics Show, held in Las Vegas in early January.

No doubt, the widespread consumption of 3-D content is on the horizon. We wrote about it twice last year in relation to its effect on animated feature films and what will soon be piped into living rooms around the globe. (And we're taking a look at producing kids TV for 3-D in the next issue.) And certainly the astounding success of James Cameron's *Avatar* is adding more fuel to the fire when it comes to talk about the inevitable rise of 3-D.

But I wonder sometimes if it's really all just more bells and whistles? With *Avatar*, for instance, 3-D enriched the viewing experience, and the ground-breaking animation made it possible to put the story on-screen, but in the end what's making people go online and create their own avatars based on the film is its plot and characters. Some have found the world Cameron created so engrossing that they're willingly signing up to become citizens of fictional planet Pandora—blue skin, long tails and pointy ears notwithstanding.

Cliché as it sounds, I believe a well-crafted story is the overarching factor in engaging an audience, not the medium. And this is why I think Jeff Gomez, who's written an op-ed piece for this issue (p. 26), is right on the money with his discussion of transmedia. Creators need to be thinking about hatching worlds and characters so rich and deep they'll be able to withstand translation to any medium thrown at them. A straightforward narrative, for example, might work best for a feature film, while subplots and backstories drawn from the property could fuel fan sites for years. Technologies like 3-D will come and go, after all, but it's unlikely people (adults and kids alike) will ever tire of partaking in a great story. Now if only I could be so sure about selecting that formerly sparkly, currently dust-catching finish for my new TV. Sigh.

Cheers,
Lana

PUBLISHER

Jocelyn Christie (jchristie@brunico.com)

EDITORIAL

Lana Castleman Editor (lcastleman@brunico.com)

Kate Calder Senior Writer (kcalder@brunico.com)

Gary Rusak Senior Writer (grusak@brunico.com)

Emily Claire Afan Online Writer (eafan@brunico.com)

Writers and Contributors Jim Benton (Bloomfield)

Jeff Gomez (New York)

Nickelodeon Kids & Family (New York)

Gary Pope (London)

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND ADVERTISING SALES

(416) 408-2300, 1-800-KID-4512

Myles Hobbs Associate Publisher (mhobbs@brunico.com)

Kristina Ejem Account Manager (kejem@brunico.com)

Ian Lambur Account Manager (ilambur@brunico.com)

Lauren Talledo Account Manager (lalledo@brunico.com)

CORPORATE

President & CEO **Russell Goldstein** (rgoldstein@brunico.com)

VP & Editorial Director **Mary Maddever** (mmaddever@brunico.com)

Controller **Linda Lovegrove** (llovegrove@brunico.com)

VP & Chief Information Officer **Omri Tintpulver** (otintpulver@brunico.com)

EVP Canadian Entertainment & Marketing **Laas Turnbull** (lturnbull@brunico.com)

BRUNICO CREATIVE

Director, Creative Services **Kerry Aitcheson** (kaitcheson@brunico.com)

Creative Director **Stephen Stanley** (stanley@brunico.com)

Art Director **Andrew Glowala** (aglowala@brunico.com)

Production/Distribution Coordinator **Robert Lines** (rlines@brunico.com)

BRUNICO AUDIENCE SERVICES

Senior Manager, Audience Services **Jennifer Colvin** (jcolvin@brunico.com)

Assistant Audience Services Manager **Christine McNailey** (cmcnailey@brunico.com)

Customer care

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Fax: 416.408.0249 Tel: 416.408.2448

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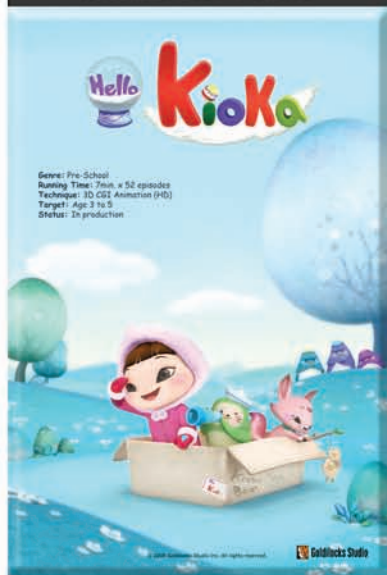
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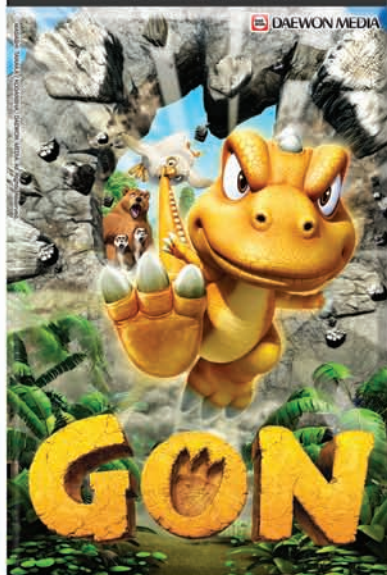
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www.daewonmedia.com

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www.bigroup.co.kr

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VOOZCLUB
Chey Lee
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www.vooz.co.kr

ICONIX ENTERTAINMENT
Mikyeong Jung
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Funnyflux Entertainment.Co.Ltd
Chang, YounJean
jean.chang@funnyflux.co.kr
82-2-376-0791
www.funnyflux.co.kr

Sunwoo Entertainment Co., Ltd.



Pixtrend Inc.



SAMG Animation Co., Ltd.



Sunwoo Entertainment Co., Ltd.
Moonju KANG
mjkang@sunwoo.com
82-2-2103-8000
www.sunwoo.com

Pixtrend Inc.
Sara Kyungwon Han-Williams
sarahw@pixtrend.com
82-2-565-4428
www.pixtrend.com

SAMG Animation Co., Ltd.
Harry Yoon
cuaharry@gmail.com
82-535-6773(109)
www.samg.net

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Designstorm



Redrover Co.,Ltd.

Thom Chapman
t.chapman@toonboxentertainment.com
82-31-777-3211
www.boltsandblip.com

WooToons

Brenda Kim
brenda@isamwoo.com
82-31-708-5574
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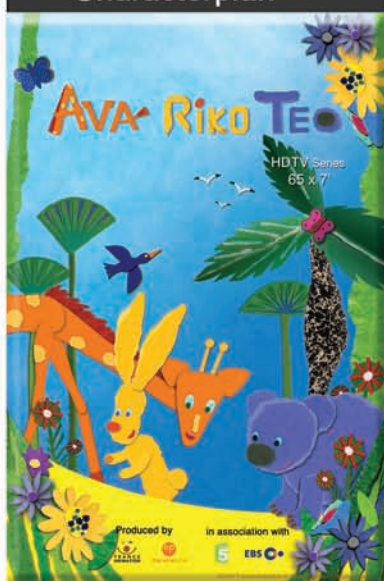
Designstorm

Esther Sohn
esther@designstorm.com
82-2-518-0414
www.designstorm.com

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D&H

Dong-jun Heo
jun@dnh.co.kr
82-2-2026-2614
www.dnh.co.kr

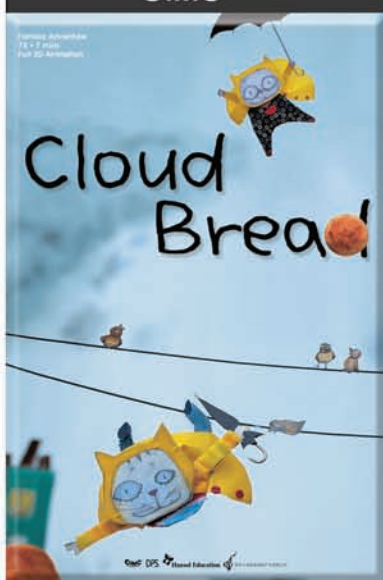
Characterplan

Donny Lee
donnylee@characterplan.co.kr
82-2-3141-7261
www.characterplan.co.kr

Fx Gear

Soohyun Lim
Sh_L@fxgear.net
82-2-514-9850
www.fxgear.net

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GIMC

Daniel You
danielyou@gimc.or.kr
82-33-245-6201
www.gimc.or.kr

Synergy Media

Alex Sung
alex@synergymedia.co.kr
82-2-540-4124
www.synergymedia.co.kr

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Nam@toonzip.com
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KIDSCREEN OUT & ABOUT

ON THE INDUSTRY TRAIL

It's hard to look beyond our next team outing because it's such a biggie for us! The entire KidScreen team is looking forward to seeing everyone at KidScreen Summit in NY this month. You won't be able to miss us at the event—we're everywhere, and we're always ready to help, so please let us know what we can do to make your Summit experience a fantastic one.

KidScreen Summit 2010 Highlights

We've got loads of great content lined up for you this year, featuring many high-profile speakers from inside and outside the industry. The sessions and speakers are so strong across the board that it's hard to single out a few to highlight, but you will definitely want to carve out some time to take in these gems...

CREATIVE KEYNOTE

The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything



Based on his highly acclaimed book of the same name, Sir **Ken Robinson** will take us on a compelling tour of what can happen in all our lives when passion and talent meet. Sir Ken's presentation draws on the personal stories of high achievers in many fields—including Sir Paul McCartney, Arianna Huffington, Matt Groening, Meg Ryan and renowned physicist Richard

Feynman—to help you understand what it takes to find The Element for yourself, how to enhance creativity and innovation in your personal and professional life, and how focusing on The Element is an essential strategy in transforming your kids entertainment business to meet the real challenges of succeeding in the twenty-first century.

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DIGITAL MEDIA KEYNOTE

New Narrative Paradigm: Becoming a Master of the Transmedia Universe



Leading cross-platform strategist **Jeff Gomez** joins us to give guidance on how to transform intellectual properties into highly lucrative transmedia franchises. Jeff conceived, co-wrote and produced one of the most successful transmedia storylines of the decade with Mattel's Hot Wheels comic books, video games, web content and animated series. He has gone on to work with

such franchises as Fairies, Pirates of the Caribbean, Prince of Persia and Tron for Disney, Halo for Microsoft, Happiness Factory for The Coca-Cola Company and, most recently, Transformers for Hasbro.

Q&A with Toys "R" Us



Toys "R" Us Inc. Chairman and CEO **Jerry Storch** will sit down for a fireside chat at the Summit. Topics up for discussion include how non-studio character merchandise programs can land shelf space on shelves at TRU, and where Storch is steering the company strategically.

CHECK OUT OUR FULL CONFERENCE AGENDA AT SUMMIT.KIDSCREEN.COM

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MIPTV Report Set to Rock

Our unparalleled editorial team has got a great lineup for this landmark feature of the April issue, including an exploration of market opportunities and pioneering efforts in **producing for 3-D TV**, our hotly anticipated roundup of **Cool New Shows**, and a report from KidsCo's upcoming roundtable discussion about the **future of educational kids programming**.

Great content aside, exposure in this critical market issue of KidScreen is an absolute must for serious kids entertainment players, and we have some exciting premium positions available to help you build buzz for your newest shows.

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Outside Back Cover

The April booking deadline is March 10, but **get in touch NOW** to secure these high-profile placements because **they won't last long!**

Super RTL Turns 15!

German powerhouse Super RTL is celebrating its 15th anniversary with an exclusive tribute in *KidScreen's* MIPTV issue. If your content has helped the channel succeed on the airwaves over the years, now's the time to celebrate that success and let the Super RTL team know how much you value their partnership. We send 3,000 extra copies of this important market issue to MIP, so your congratulations will echo wide in the industry.

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andre@2dlab.com.br
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Rio de Janeiro - RJ - Brazil

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THE HUB LOOKS TO ATTRACT INDIE PRODCOS

by kate calder

After months of industry speculation, the Discovery-Hasbro JV unveiled a name and channel branding for the net that's scheduled to take over The Discovery Kids US feed this fall. And good news may be in store for producers. The Hub, as it's been dubbed, is on the hunt for new series, in particular family comedies in live-action or animated formats.

President and CEO Margaret Loesch says The Hub's new VP of scheduling and acquisitions, Lou Fazio, and director of programming, Ted Biaselli, will be at KidScreen Summit this month looking for shows to fill out not only the channel's launch schedule, but also to feed into its slate for years two and three. Besides acquisitions, Loesch says her team already has roughly two dozen concepts for original shows in development. And the programming team will be moving quickly to get a firm schedule in place in the next couple of months.

Loesch says that her team is also taking a supportive approach to commissioning content. "As far as I know, we're the only major kids network telling producers that we don't have to own your product to make a commitment," she notes. In fact, in order to provide a competitive alternative for indie producers, the fledgling channel will consider partnerships, a




straightforward license fee structure, or introducing prodcos to companies that can help provide deficit financing to get a show made.

The Hub—whose name is meant to signify the network is aiming to be a central place for kids and families to gather—will reach roughly 60 million homes on its inherited feed. In terms of programming, it's casting a wide net and plans to feature shows spanning comedy, animation, live action and game shows that serve a core six to 12 audience. Loesch adds that a special emphasis will be placed on programming for kids at the top end of the six to nine demo—a specific target age that she says isn't being served by the big-three US kidcasters. (She contends their content often skews younger or caters to tweens.) So super-serving seven to nines, she concludes, is The Hub's point of difference.

Of course, newly launched Hasbro Studios is going to be a key supplier to The Hub, and it's currently in pre-production on series based on the toyco's IPs, including Transformers and My Little Pony.

Online, hubworld.com will offer kids access to video clips, interactive games and community features to extend the kidnet's content experience. To that end, Loesch says she's working closely with The Hub's creative team to put together a cohesive online/channel plan. Original games are in development, and pre-existing titles have been lined up for the website's launch.

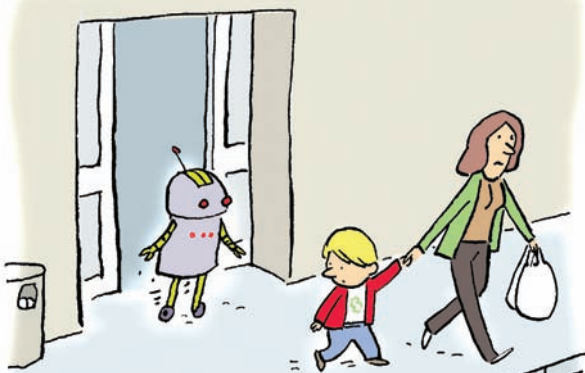
As for the back-end business at the ad-supported channel, The Hub is in initial talks with potential advertisers. "We're trying to be very creative in how we present our advertising and what the advertising load is." 

LINKS

The Hub > www.hubworld.com

Roll the Cartoon

by jim benton



Toy Industry celebrates Next Generation Robotic Toys that just purchase themselves and follow consumers home.

Okay robotic toy tech hasn't come that far...yet, but you can check out the latest category developments in our "Reboot" Toy Fair feature on page 80

Disney XD unveils results of pan-Euro tween study

by kate calder

Having never known a world without the internet, today's tweens are proving to be a bit flummoxing when it comes to providing them with relevant, engaging media content. And driven by the quest to find out how differently tweens consume media and view their place in the world, Disney XD undertook a lengthy pan-European study of the demo. The net just released its findings and the effect they will have on program development.

The study revealed the existence of a new generation of digitally savvy eight- to 14-year-olds with a heightened awareness of their future and that of the planet. Coined *Generation XD*, the study concentrates on the kids belonging to Gen-X parents and was conducted as part of Disney XD's ongoing channel research. More than 3,000 eight- to 14-year-olds in six countries (UK, France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain) were polled.

Victoria Hardy, executive director of EMEA Research, Disney Channels, says the project, which took two years to complete, is helping Disney XD develop and deliver relevant entertainment that incorporates themes important to tweens' lives. For example, she says, the findings pointed to a need to create boys programs featuring an aspirational character that speaks to their core value of accomplishment. Subsequently, the net's been developing series with strong male leads. That will help the resulting shows relate to boys on a deeper level.

Disney contends the results also shatter many myths about children's relationships with the internet and their attitudes towards family and celebrity culture. Hardy says her research team was particularly interested in three key findings.

First, it discovered kids are using the internet in a very positive way that includes entertainment, such as gaming, as well as homework-related research. In fact, homework (59%) scored second only to gaming (74%) as the most common use of the platform. Second, Disney XD discovered kids are using the internet to enhance their social interaction, rather than replace it altogether—preferring face-to-face interaction, while using social networks, emailing and texting as other means of keeping up with their friends. Finally, the study revealed that despite living in a celebrity-focused culture, kids largely aren't aspiring to be famous themselves, and look more to community-minded careers such as teachers, vets and police officers. And in every single country, respondents said



Disney XD's extensive two-year study of today's tweens revealed they are very attached to their social communities and tend to use the web to find entertainment and information in near-equal measure

the person they admire most in the world is their mom at 43%, with dad coming second at 30%.

This demo also said caring for the environment is important. A full 97% believe it is important to look after the planet. (74% said they recycle regularly.) Additionally, despite the credit crunch, which is in part a result of the credit-and-debt culture of their parents' generation, modern tweens are establishing good financial habits early—70% are saving their pocket money rather than spending it immediately, while 64% said they would much rather work for themselves than for someone else when they grow up.

Launched internationally in the UK in August 2009, Disney XD has now completed its European expansion. All former Jetix channels have been rebranded as Disney XD, with the most recent being the Netherlands in January. And speaking to the study's potential for honing localized market strategies, Hardy says the findings revealed more commonalities than differences across territories. Disney XD found key trends in social and economic values to be universal among this demo. 

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Canuck kidsaster YTV is finding parents and children can agree about watching *iCarly*

Corus Kids hones in on co-viewing

by gary rusak

A new way of gathering viewership numbers, combined with a just-released research study from Canuck kidnet YTV, has confirmed what distributors of kids content have been saying for a long time—parents watch a lot of children's programming with their kids and pay keen attention to it.

North American metrics maven Nielsen instituted a new measurement system continent-wide last September. Worn just like a pager, the Portable People Meter registers tones hidden within broadcaster audio streams. Viewing habits are recorded seamlessly, taking the onus entirely off the inhabitants of "Nielsen households" to record what they're watching. Interestingly, what PPM results have revealed for YTV and other Corus Kids channels like Treehouse is that parents are watching a lot more TV with their kids than the older metrics indicated.

"The PPM captures what's on the TV, when you're standing in front of it," says Corus Kids GM Doug Murphy. "With the old system, a lot of kids and their parents weren't necessarily pushing the buttons on the set-top meters."

New ratings in-hand, Corus commissioned third-party research firm Decode to conduct an online survey of 1,000 parents with kids ages two to 12 to get a handle on just how big a role co-viewing plays in their lives. The findings were then included in the fifth-annual *YTV Observer* report.

"We have always tried to build strong co-view behavior," says Murphy. "Advertising agencies and clients didn't always believe there was a large co-view rate—the new people meter technology has really broken that story."

According to the report, 96% of moms said they enjoyed co-viewing experiences. The study also found that TV is second only to family dinners as the most common family activity.

"We found that parents' number-one concern was they weren't spending enough time with their kids," says Mark Leslie, director of research at Corus Television. "And now we know that TV time is considered family time."

Moreover, the study was able to determine the specific recall parents have of the programs and advertisements they encounter during co-viewing sessions.

"Put simply, ad recall is more than it would be if parents were watching by themselves," says Murphy. "It's because parents and kids discuss what they see together, and parents are always monitoring the messages being sent to their kids."

Importantly, it is not just in traditional kids ad categories like toys (+23%), movies (+9%) and clothing (+5%) where recall is positively affected by co-viewing. According to the report, co-viewing improved recall rates for parents across all categories, including those for non-endemic adult-targeted goods like travel (+8%), automotive (+7%) and home electronics (+6%).

These numbers have given ammo to the Corus team to approach a wide range of new advertisers for their 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. co-view block on YTV that includes parent-friendly series *iCarly* and *Everybody Hates Chris*.

"Our growth area is in co-view," says Murphy. "Our team has been telling this story for awhile—the numbers are now validating that."

Murphy believes the co-viewing numbers and their relation to advertising recall is a new bright spot for the content delivery business. "People need to realize that if you make a good show that can deliver a consistent co-view audience, networks like us are certainly going to look at it." ■

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When it comes to creating rich transmedia IPs with staying power, Lucasfilm is one of the best in the biz

Opinion

Blasting kids entertainment into the next decade

by Jeff Gomez

Much has been made of a quote I gave to *New York* magazine in January about the obliteration of Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man 4*. Basically, I expressed my astonishment that Sony Pictures would invest many millions of dollars to make the original *Spider-Man*, watch it become a huge global film franchise, and then basically shut it down while renegotiating contracts with key players or waiting for Raimi and the screenwriters to come up with a viable sequel idea.

This is what you do with a property that's worth untold dollars to your bottom line? Grapple over which villains you're going to use years after a shakily conceived second sequel, weeks after somebody turns in a script for number four with a release date already set? Is that really the way Hollywood still works?

Not for everyone. There are some entertainment execs who understand how the landscape has changed, especially when it comes to entertaining kids. With the flick of a finger, any six-year-old is capable of shaping and altering what she or he watches and enjoys. With *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, for example, Lucasfilm gives kids aspirational heroes, creates an engaging story and a richly imagined universe, and allows them access to it anytime and anywhere—on TV, the web, through their Xboxes, you name it.

More importantly, kids want content that counts. Presenting them with the same content in different formats won't work. They want bits that move the plot forward, or add to their understanding of the storyworld; they even want forums that invite them to have a say in how it all turns out.

Enter transmedia. When applied with careful planning and artistry, transmedia storytelling is capable of shifting producers of kids entertainment away from the old-school mentality (read: linear, single platform). A good transmedia producer would look at *Spider-Man* (or *Tinker Bell*, *Hot Wheels* or *Transformers*) and understand that the property is bigger than any one medium. It

requires long-term planning (five years or more), a strategic rollout and a sense of how each grand story arc will play out and be communicated through each media touchpoint.

Business and development practices must change to meet these criteria. So must our creative models. The story presentation needs to leverage the strengths of each specific platform. To use something as interactive and participatory as the web, for example, as simply another television screen is *spirit-crushing*.

Some might say it's not our job as creators and producers to come up with how our characters and stories will work as video games, toy lines or Tweets on Twitter. Well, I'm not saying that we all have to learn how to write novels, design action figures or come up with transmedia blueprints (though some of us might find the prospect creatively alluring), but I do believe we need to push ourselves as creators. We have to make our worlds wider, richer and deeper so they can withstand these multi-platform extensions.

Fortunately, Lucasfilm's approach is no longer the exception. The time has come for the transmedia producer, a specialist in the development, production and strategic rollout of aspirational fictional worlds. Transmedia producers will function as franchise stewards, creatively bridging the gaps between talent, marketing, licensing partners and fans to nurture kids properties into the next decade. Admittedly the old-school suits who look at stories one script at a time aren't dropping out of the picture entirely, but why not check out the new school—I hear it has WiFi. **N**



Jeff Gomez, CEO of Starlight Runner Entertainment, has consulted on projects such as Disney's *Pirates of the Caribbean*, James Cameron's *Avatar* and Hasbro's *Transformers*. You can catch him at KidScreen Summit 2010. He's the event's Digital Media keynote speaker and will examine how to transform intellectual properties into highly lucrative transmedia franchises.

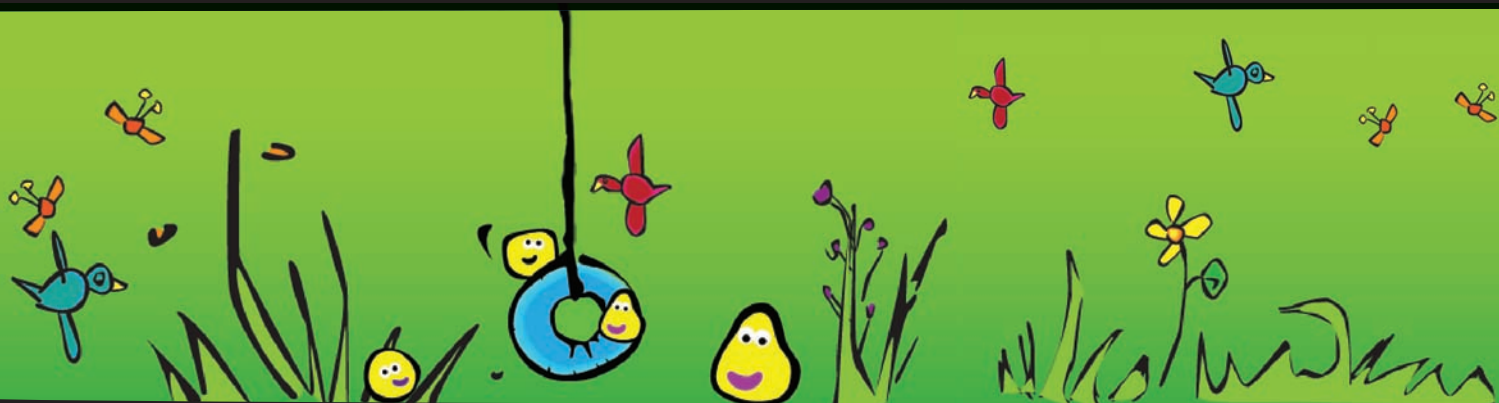


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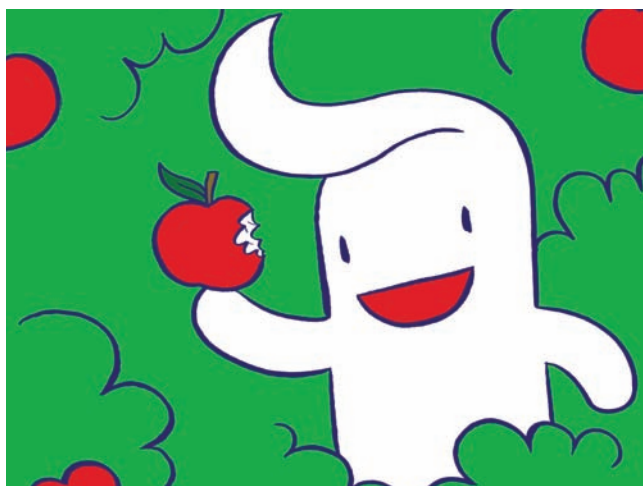


Top Shelf gets animated with kids graphic novel properties

For the last five years, US indie publishing house Top Shelf Productions has been devoted to expanding the appeal of comic books and graphic novels beyond their core fan-boy base. Why not engage kids as young as possible to build a new generation of readers, was the thinking of co-founders Chris Staros and Brett Warnock. So the 13-year-old publisher created its Kids Club division in 2004, devoted to finding younger-skewing works that could be enjoyed by all ages. And those efforts have really started to pay off in the last year.

Staros discovered Andy Runton and his character Owly in early 2000. The subsequent preschool-targeted, dialogue-free graphic novel starring the large-eyed owl was inspired by Runton's close relationship with his mother, with whom he shared a love of birdwatching and taking care of animals. The five-book series has been garnering attention in the kids space, and this past fall got picked up by publishing giant Simon & Schuster. (It's developing two full-color picture books for release in 2011.)

The property has also piqued the interest of animation folk, as L.A.-based Sprite Animation Studios caught wind of the Owly series and approached Top Shelf about translating it to TV. The prodco, partnered with Japan's OLM of *Pokémon* fame, worked with the publisher to create a two-minute trailer for last year's Comic-Con International. Sprite is now seeking another co-production partner to turn the concept into a full-fledged series.



James Kochalka's *Johnny Boo* is among several Kids Club properties in indie publisher Top Shelf's portfolio that are ripe for translating to the small screen

While Owly is Top Shelf's main kids priority at the moment, Staros sees potential in two of its younger-skewing graphic novels, both of which have kids TV connections. Woodland fantasy *Korgi* was written and illustrated by former Disney animator Christian Slade. The ghostly adventures of *Johnny Boo*, meanwhile, come from the mind of cartoonist James Kochalka, who gained toon experience at Nickelodeon. Both series have new volumes hitting US retail shelves this spring.

Staros is also continuing to fill out the Kids Club roster. He's always keeping his eyes peeled for appropriate content that has adventure, subtext and heart. Next up, however, is *Maddy Kettle*, a graphic novel from kids book illustrator Eric Orchard targeting the tween demo. The novel follows the adventurous story of a little girl living in a magical world where floating ships that chart clouds are not uncommon.

Top Shelf is treading carefully with its first kids TV venture, but it's no stranger to the big screen. Its previous graphic novels that have been translated into major motion pictures for older audiences include Alan Moore's *From Hell* (2001), *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (2003) and, most recently, Disney's *The Surrogates* (2009).

What's more, entrepreneur John S. Johnson and New York-based prodco Likely Story, run by Anthony Bregman, acquired a 33% stake in Top Shelf in mid-January, giving the pair a first-look film and TV development deal on all of the company's new publications. Alex Robinson's *Too Cool to Be Forgotten* is the first project to move forward under the deal, which revolves around a 40-something father who tries to quit smoking, and through hypnosis therapy, gets transported back to his teen years to re-live his high school days. **ECA**

LINKS

Top Shelf Productions >

www.topshelfcomic.com

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VP of project development and sales, Starz Media

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ideas at work



Sofi On Safari and Olly The Little White Van to launch on GMTV KIDS in the UK in October 2010.

Wild Pumpkin in Australia appointed as the international agent to develop the Sofi On Safari licensing programme in Australia and New Zealand.

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Moonscoop scored sales on kids DDT channels Clan TVE in Spain, RAI Gulp in Italy and France 4 for *Code Lyoko*

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF DTT

DISTRIBUTORS AND BROADCASTERS ATTEMPT TO KEEP PACE WITH DIGITAL TERRESTRIAL TRANSMISSION

by kate calder

A crop of new Euro DTT kidnets makes for more sales, but cuts into revenues

AS the switchover from analogue to digital transmission creeps across Europe, new digital terrestrial television (DTT) broadcasters are popping up, creating a larger market for kids content. And in turn, producers, distributors and broadcasters are dealing with the growing pains produced by a huge shift in reaching audiences.

"It's a lot more complicated than it used to be," says Josh Scherba, VP of distribution at Toronto-based international distributor Decode Enterprises. "There's a higher premium on market knowledge than there ever has been because the technologies are changing so quickly and each country has its own idiosyncrasies."

And that might be something of an understatement. According to industry tracker European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO) there are 224 children's channels in Europe to date and 17 of those sprung up just last year. In fact, the incidence of children's channel launches was second only to that of dedicated sports channels of the 245 that launched last year.

EAO also reports that 24 countries now have DTT systems up and running, while three more are in the process of launching them and, at the end of 2009, there were more than 730 DTT channels bring broadcast on the continent. As it stands now, DTT services have been completely implemented in six European coun-

tries—Germany, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden. Next to follow are Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Italy and the UK. Malta, Spain and Slovenia are lined up after that. And earlier this year, EAO noted France, Italy, Spain and the UK—the four markets with a large terrestrial TV audience—had reached high levels of DTT penetration, as they near analogue switch-off.

A level playing field

Along with an emergence of more kids channels comes a plethora of new buyers hungry to snap up content. Karine Leyzin head of programming at French network Gulli, says there are far more opportunities now for independent producers. She contends DTT channels often have quite a bit of airtime to fill and are more open to experimenting and willing to schedule shows that likely wouldn't get a chance on major terrestrial networks. Gulli, a DTT channel owned by parentco France Télévisions, which launched four years ago, airs from 6:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. and has an average of 150,000 daily primetime viewers.

Moonscoop president of worldwide distribution Lionel Marty, whose series *Code Lyoko* is airing on Clan TV (Spain), RAI Gulp (Italy) and France 4, agrees that the DTT kids channels have a strong appetite for new programs. He particularly likes that their scheduling practices often provide numerous slots and a lot of repetition and exposure for a series, as opposed to the limited real estate available on terrestrial channels. In fact, he

credits Moonscoop's ability to roll out a Code Lyoko licensing program in Spain to the success it had airing on Clan TV.

The vast number of channels has also created somewhat of a level playing field for broadcasters—leaving distributors scrambling to make more sales. “One would have hoped with the emergence of these digital free-to-air channels that it would be another supplementary way to sell to the market, but the truth is that most of the kids pay-TV channels consider the digital free-to-air channels as direct competition,” he says.

Gulli, which has become a major player in France, is an example of a channel that terrestrial powerhouse TF1 considers to be direct competition. However, Sherba explains that as dedicated kids channels, pay-TV broadcasters such as Nick and Disney also consider DTT newcomers to be direct competition. “As a distributor, it gives us more places to sell, but perhaps diminishes the value of each of those places,” says Scherba.

Full exposure

Overshadowing the increased sales opportunity, in fact, are the smaller license fees that come with a DTT deal. Bristol, England-based Aardman Animations' head of sales Alix Wiseman says it's challenging adapting to the new landscape, in which you can't demand 30% of a production fee on an acquisition anymore. However, she's choosing to look at the bright side, contending the increased exposure gives companies the opportunity to build brands.

“In the old days, if both the free-TV and pay-TV broadcaster said no, then you had nowhere to go,” Wiseman says. “Now, at least you have an initial platform to work off and potentially make enough success of a show that it raises the eyebrows of bigger channels.” She does admit that accepting a lower license fee is part-and-parcel of this strategy.

Barcelona-based Elastic Rights president Ignacio Orive admits you have to pound the pavement a bit harder to make more sales to meet revenue budgets, but he's also seeing an opportunity in the proliferation of DTT in building exposure. Spain is an example of a formerly closed broadcast market that began opening up to content producers worldwide with the issue of DTT licenses five years ago. Orive estimates that DTT is now available in 80% of households in the country, and that will jump to 100% penetration in April when the switch off happens. “The channels that used to lead the pack a few years back had a 30% share. Now the highest-rated channel in Spain has approximately 14% to 15%, and there's a large number of channels that are entering

between 0% and 5%,” he says. And right now, Elastic Right's kid-targeted telenovella, *Patito Feo*, is delivering more than half a million viewers every night on Spain's DTT Disney Channel.

And Orive says DTT success in Spain is also benefiting the series' sales elsewhere. “We would have cancelled all hope of selling the series to any of the major Spanish players,” he says. “But the success we're enjoying on Disney is so huge that they revisited their decision, and Telecinco took the series on Saturdays and Sundays behind the Disney premiere.”

Rights, rights, rights

In an effort to overcome lower license fees and ring as much revenue as possible from their catalogues, windowing broadcast rights—as Orive did with *Patito Feo* for Disney and Telecinco—has become the go-to strategy. Fellow Barcelona-based distribution company Imira also uses this as a method of structuring deals, as channels will pay higher fees in order to secure first-run/first-window rights. “Then we sell the show to other channels, which can come in months or a year later at a lower license fee,” says Imira's head of distribution and marketing, Christophe Goldberger.

However, some broadcasters are balking at the idea of windowing as the competition for viewers grows ever-tighter and their acquisition budgets get smaller with the influx of these new DTT channels. For her part, head of acquisitions at Norway's NRK

Super, Elin Raustol, admits the amount of available airtime has prompted the need to buy more programming, but at the same time, she's working with a much lower budget.

She says her team, which programs the DTT channel targeting kids two to 12, now has to acquire more episodes, obtain longer windows and get more runs out of a single licensing deal. “One run on a digital channel has less value than it had on a main channel,” she says. “We need about three or four runs on different slots to reach the same amount of children as before.”

In a tight market, where there are more kids channels to choose from, NRK Super attempts to lure viewers (as most kidcasters do) with exclusive programming, blocks and promotions. Raustol also makes a point of harnessing catch-up video rights for use on the channel's website. She says these rights have become increasingly important as NRK Super branches out on multiple platforms.

Similarly, Gulli's Leyzin contends, “We know that kids' behavior of consuming media is



Patito Feo's success on Spain's Disney Channel led to its Telecinco sale



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Decode's Scherba says pubcasters like NRK, which picked up series *Grandpa in My Pocket* for its kids DDT channel NRK Super, will now rarely acquire for its main terrestrial channel unless it can secure rights for the DTT service

changing. We compete with the Wii and the internet now. So for a brand like Gulli, the personality of the channel is very important." In short, branding and channel identity is becoming just as big an issue for DTT players as it is for established networks like Disney or Nickelodeon.

CBeebies controller Michael Carrington says thriving in the UK market, which now has 24 dedicated kids channels, means connecting with its specific target of boy and girls under six. He says license fees for kids programming in the UK actually went up when DTT channels started launching and have remained static over the last three years. He also says his channel looks for

longer windows to strip the series on DTT, and it buys exclusive terrestrial and digital rights in the same package.

Striving to build a brand means giving viewers what they want on multiple platforms, which has made investing more in order to acquire multiple exclusive rights to a property the epicenter of many a drawn-out negotiation process. And it doesn't look like deal-making sessions are going to get any shorter. Besides online rights, broadcasters who want to make sure they have all bases covered are increasingly asking for IPTV rights as part of the package. Decode's Scherba, who has been dealing exclusively in selling IPTV rights to Korea, says the digital platform is also quickly taking hold in markets that never had an established cable industry, as another vehicle for existing pay-TV broadcasters. Scherba also ID's Australia, whose massive size never lent itself well to the logistics of a cable system, as an emerging market for IPTV as a platform.

Imira's Goldberger is more sanguine about the situation. "The industry is still working the same amount of money being recycled from the same business model, trying to expand content as much as possible," he says. "People are talking about the importance of paying every time you see something on the web, but until we put together solutions that will inject new money into getting series made, the kids TV industry will be in a difficult position." **N**

LINKS

• Cbeebies >	www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies.com
• Decode >	www.decode-ent.com
• Elastic Rights >	www.elasticrights.com
• Gulli >	www.gulli.fr
• Imira Entertainment >	www.imiraentertainment.com
• Moonscoop >	www.moonscoop.com
• NRK Super >	www.nrksuper.no

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New toon *Wild Kratts* takes animal adventures to the max

The Kratts go 2-D for new eco-adventures

Chris and Martin Kratt, the gregarious siblings who head up Ottawa, Canada-based Kratt Brothers and have created kids nature shows such as *Kratt's Creatures* and *Zoboomafoo*, are morphing into 2-D animated form. In their new series for core kids, *Wild Kratts* (40 x 22 minutes), the pair of zoologists is on a mission to save the planet's animals from the opportunistic biotech villain, Zach Varmitech. Like any evil genius worth his salt, Varmitech's plotting to take over the world—this time he's attempting create a legion of robots, made from various animal parts, that will do his bidding.

The Kratts have teamed up with Toronto, Canada's 9 Story Entertainment on production, with 9 Story handling distribution outside the US and Canada. Episodes are budgeted at approximately US\$300,000 apiece, with delivery for the first 20 scheduled for August 2010 and a second batch to follow in January 2011. Participating broadcasters so far include PBS Kids in the US and Canadian nets TVOntario, Tele-Quebec and Knowledge Network.

In the series, Chris is the pragmatic and technically inclined brother with an encyclopedic knowledge of animals. He serves as the perfect complement to Martin, an artistic, impulsive big-ideas

guy who likes to crack jokes. Their brilliant and stylish, tech-savvy friend, Aviva Corcovado, helps the brothers in their rescue efforts by creating animal-inspired inventions, such as computerized suits that take on the attributes of various creatures through a data download. Joining Aviva in her lab are Koki, a sharp-witted computer whiz, and Jimmy Z, who uses his superior gaming skills to control the Teleporter—a device that delivers the inventions to the Kratts wherever their globetrotting takes them.

In a typical episode, Chris develops a fear of heights when he falls from a tall tree in the Indonesian rainforest where he's searching for the rare Draco lizard. Ribs that stick out of its body and act as wings enable the reptile to fly. Martin and the Draco, meanwhile, are captured by fashion designer Donita Donata, who plans to create jewelry using the colorful Draco's body, and in the end, Chris must overcome his fear of heights in order to save his brother and the lizard.

The Kratts have found animation somewhat liberating, as it's permitted the brothers to up the physical comedy quotient and depict natural phenomena that wouldn't be possible in live action. No one has the budget or resources, for example, to travel deep below the sea and document a battle between a sperm whale and a giant squid, but for an animator it's just part of a day's work.

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The NBA's Tony Parker gives basketball expertise as well as life advice to a teen street team in *High5*

Tele Images turns to NBA superstar for new toon

Paris-based Tele Images Kids, part of The Marathon Group, is burnishing its latest animated series *High5* with some celeb sparkle. Tony Parker, star point guard for National Basketball Association (NBA) franchise the San Antonio Spurs, has signed on to star, in toon form, as the coach of a gutsy and determined street basketball team in the new 52 x 26-minute series. At the show's core are five teens, including three boys and two girls, who travel the US and Canada with the dream of winning a national amateur basketball tournament.

On the court, Tony teaches his prodigies everything he knows about basketball and counsels them about the game of life. In each episode, the five players battle other ball players while dealing with the usual social trappings of average teen life and getting to know each other's quirks, often leading to conflict, competition and misunderstandings.

The culture and lifestyle of each locale the team winds up in also plays a role in the plot. (The group travels to big cities and small towns found in remote Canadian provinces and the American South.) In L.A., for example, the team vies for a spot on a popular TV show, and while competing in New Orleans, the group becomes convinced that there are zombies afoot.

Tele Images Kids president Philippe Alessandri says roughly 25% of the series' urban, hip-hop flavored storylines will focus on basketball, and the rest will be character-driven. Rudi, the point guard and team captain, serves as the narrator and even has a play-by-play blog. Teammates Mike and Leo are a goofy comic duo, while Mia—a glamor girl interested in celebrity gossip—and strategy-oriented over-achiever Stella bring feminine perspectives.

France's M6 has greenlit the series, and Alessandri says two-thirds of the US\$8.8-million budget is in place. Tele Images plans to partner with Toronto, Canada's Breakthrough Entertainment, with which it worked on *Atomic Betty*. Production is set to begin this spring, aiming for a fall 2011 delivery date.

The Marathon Group's parentco Zodiak Entertainment is handling international distribution, and M6 has snapped up L & M rights for France. Alessandri adds that Tele Images is also in talks with the NBA to partner up for on-air promos and merchandising State-side.

Streetwise kid dishes out dance in *Buz at the Ballet*

Buz at the Ballet aims to make the high art of classical dance relatable for this generation's mass of TV-watching kids ages four to eight. From newly created London-based prodco Buz and Friends, the 26 x 26-minute mixed-media series uses real footage from live stage performances as the backdrop for Buz, a plucky little animated boy who gives a very streetwise kid-to-kid rundown of the ballet's plot.

Each episode will focus on a different production, such as *Cinderella*, *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake*, performed by a renowned ballet company. To that end, Buz and Friends has enlisted the cooperation of several international ballet orgs, and the help of an international ballet star to act as a story consultant.

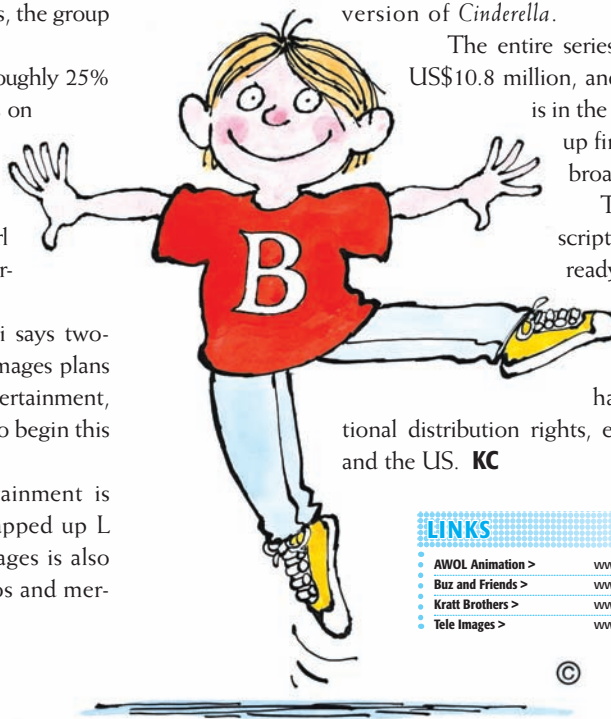
Although Buz isn't your typical refined dance connoisseur, he is an enthusiast nonetheless. And the sight of him running around on stage, emulating the graceful movements of a prima ballerina in his own spunky way is sure to tickle funny bones.

Each episode will also have Buz befriend another animated character specific to the ballet being featured. For example, he'll meet a toy soldier in *The Nutcracker* and a toon version of *Cinderella*.

The entire series has a budget of US\$10.8 million, and Buz and Friends is in the process of firming up financing and a UK broadcast partner.

The first crop of scripts is complete and ready to head into production. Paris-based AWOL Animation is handling interna-

tional distribution rights, excluding the UK and the US. **KC**



LINKS

• AWOL Animation >	www.awolanimation.com
• Buz and Friends >	www.buzandfriends.com
• Kratt Brothers >	www.krattbrothers.com
• Tele Images >	www.tele-images.com

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Wildbrain taps interactive ad agency to Fuel IP pipeline

With the line between traditional TV and online media continuing to blur, it might not be so surprising to learn that California-based prod-co Wildbrain is turning to Ottawa, Canada's innovative digital brand-builder and online gaming creator Fuel Industries to pad out its development pipeline. The pair have struck a deal that will see Wildbrain develop TV series, motion pictures, direct-to-consumer platforms and consumer products based on Fuel's slate of existing properties.

For the past few years, Fuel has been hatching original kids brands alongside its core game and ad agency work. "We're creating properties with more than a linear TV script in mind, whether it's a console gaming platform, or PC, or mobile, as well as prepping them for toy and gaming opportunities right from the start," says Fuel CEO Mike Burns.

For example, the company has been developing girl-targeted gaming portal AllGirlArcade.com and virtual world Spark City, which has an extensive bible ready to go. Fairies and Dragons, meanwhile, is an IP started as a means of testing digital Happy Meal giveaways for McDonald's Europe. The Happy Meal promotion covered 40 Euro markets and 11 languages and included a mini-game on a CD-ROM that corresponded with each of the four fairy figurines and four dragon trading card games.

Burns says Fuel will benefit from Wildbrain's extensive know-how in dealing with the big-three kidnets to produce TV series. (Wildbrain has landed *Yo Gabba Gabba!* and *Bubble Guppies* on Nick Jr. and *Higglytown Heroes* on Disney in recent years.)

Fuel has two other properties, Sideway and Tetsurai, still in early stages of development. A console game is underway for Sideway, which is about a rebellious New York youth and his mysterious adventures in a two-dimensional world that comes to life on the city's walls. And Tetsurai is set in an alternate industrial future full of hissing steam and clanking iron, combining television, an MMOG, an arcade fighter and a role-playing game in a dark, sci-fi package.

Fuel Industries' gaming property
AllGirlArcade.com



"We're really allowing Wildbrain to go to town on it and looking forward to having shared creative meetings and envisioning what these properties can grown into," says Burns. He adds the edgy look of both properties have potential for consumer products that would complement the design aesthetic of Wildbrain's sister company, specialty retailer Kidrobot.

Wildbrain's CEO Michael Polis says the two companies' compatible personalities and tastes, as well as Fuel's flexibility, will work well in exploring ways to bring the properties to life in multiple mediums, as opposed to immediately taking the traditional TV route.

"We have a huge leg up given these properties have been developed for the game space," says Polis. He adds, "We bring a lot of strength in figuring out story elements and enhancing the character development." Meanwhile, Polis says he's gotten more involved in content creation since the departure of former head of creative Bob Higgins, and is in the process of looking for a new exec to take on the vacant role. **KC**

LINKS

Fuel Industries >
Wildbrain >

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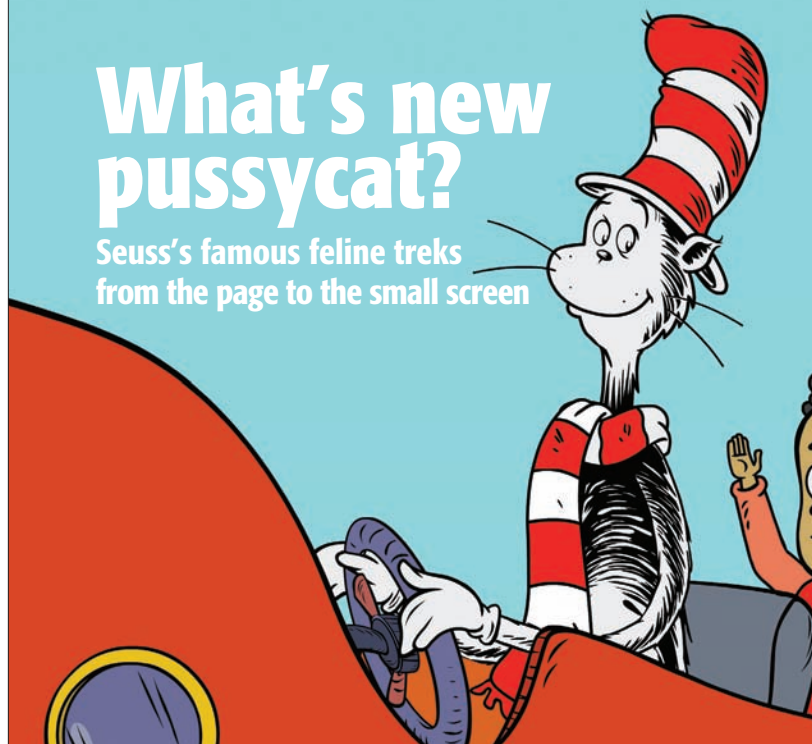
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What's new pussycat?

Seuss's famous feline treks
from the page to the small screen



Translating an iconic kids property from one medium to another is a tall order at the best of times. And taking one beloved by multiple generations whose last move from book to screen was critically panned is something altogether more difficult. (We won't allude to Mike Myers again.) However, Toronto, Canada's Portfolio Entertainment and UK-based Collingwood O'Hare are more than up for the challenge presented in bringing Dr. Seuss's 50-year-old character The Cat in the Hat to life in a new 2-D animated series.

As it turns out, competition to produce new preschool toon *The Cat in the Hat Knows A Lot About That!* for Random House Children's Entertainment was stiff. "[Random House and Dr. Seuss Enterprises] were really looking at our aesthetics and the creative style we were proposing for the series," says Portfolio co-president Lisa Olfman. "Our goal was to lift it off the page and be true to the books," she adds. What the animators came up with was a look that Olfman says keeps the round lines and soft palette of the original illustrations, staying true to core Seussian elements, while putting a fresh spin on the character and his environs.

After Portfolio/Collingwood O'Hare scored the production deal (Portfolio also holds international distribution rights), US pubcaster PBS Kids and Canadian 24/7 preschool net Treehouse signed on for the US\$15-million series.

Portfolio co-president Joy Rosen says the next challenge was coming up with the 11-minute story concepts that make up the series' 40 half hours, focusing on one very engaging character—The Cat in the Hat. To do that, the writing team is pulling from Random House's 12-year-old beginner reading franchise *The Cat in the Hat's Learning Library*, which concentrates on relaying facts about science and nature. The Cat's neighbors and best friends, six-year-old Sally and Nick, also star in the series along with his two zany helpers, Thing One and Thing Two. Enigmatic, curmudgeonly Fish makes an appearance, too.



The Cat takes Sally and Nick on learning adventures in *The Cat in the Hat Knows A Lot About That!*

In each ep, Sally and Nick approach The Cat with a burning question, such as how rainbows are created or why a bird in their backyard disappeared. After setting up the story, The Cat whisks them away via his one-of-a-kind Thinga-majigger vehicle. The trio then takes a journey to uncover the answer, often meeting new creatures such as polar bears, starfish and penguins. The pursuit of information takes them far and wide. Undertaking an ocean voyage to meet a whale, flying over the rainforest to see animals that live in the great Kapok tree, or entering a beehive to see how honey is made are all possible in *The Cat in the Hat Knows A Lot About That!*

Scripts and voice-overs for the series, slated for a fall 2010 launch on both networks, are underway. Olfman and Rosen say one of the production highlights so far has been working with legendary comedian and Second City alum Martin Short. He's voicing the ever-mischievous lead character.

"[Short] does three takes," explains Olfman. "He does the first take from the script; another, adding some of his own dialogue; and then an improvised one, where he lets go and has a great time."

On the publishing side, Random House is creating a complementary book series. The publisher has access to Portfolio's scripts and Random House Children's Books VP and publisher Kate Klimo is overseeing the development of the line. Klimo also has first-hand knowledge of how Theodore Geisel, the man behind the Dr. Seuss moniker, worked—she was his long-time editor. "Kate really holds a lot of the brand's DNA because of her rich experience working with Mr. Geisel for all those years," says Rosen.

Random House will also be producing a website for the series that will be made available to broadcasters, and Portfolio has brought on Dallas, Texas-based NCircle Entertainment as its home entertainment partner. **KC**

LINKS

• NCircle Entertainment >	www.ncircleentertainment.com
• Portfolio Entertainment >	www.portfolioentertainment.com
• Random House >	www.randomhouse.com



PRESENTS



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Digital content more popular than ever with kids

IT probably comes as no surprise that today's youth are acquiring more entertainment content than ever. But what might be the fact that they're getting it in digital form at an unprecedented rate.

According to The NPD Group's latest *Kids and Entertainment Content* report released last month, some 79% of US kids ages two to 14 have obtained entertainment content by digital means in the past year. Meanwhile, 31% are consuming both physical and digital media, and less than 1% have gone fully digital.

The report suggests kids are accessing digital media to supplement their physical content collections. Plus, as NPD industry analyst Anita Frazier notes, digital content has simply become more readily available. "The instant gratification of digital content is alluring," she says. "If a kid wants to interact with one of their favorite properties, they can very often do so instantaneously via the internet."

The top entertainment-based services or subscriptions used by this group of kids to obtain content were video rental stores (19%), online video rental services (12%), and online music services (14%). Also worth noting is that the majority of kids aren't paying

for content using their own pocket money, but rather purchasing the goods via monetary gifts or cash from parents. Interestingly, US\$0.85 of every dollar spent on content went towards buying physical media, while just US\$0.15 was spent on digital formats.

And because today's kids don't know a world without the internet, they are picking up digital habits at increasingly younger ages. NPD found that 43% of downloaders were six years old or younger when they first acquired digital content. "I was very surprised to learn that nearly half of the kids had downloaded some form of digital content by the time they were six and 10% of boys ages two to five regularly use YouTube," says Frazier.

The report is chock-full of information that's relevant to understanding how kids are consuming entertainment, including details on how TV viewing methods are changing—another area of surprise for Frazier. She says 16% of kids report watching TV on computers, adding that watching programming on a TV is still the most prevalent way of consuming TV content. "But the world has definitely changed," she concludes. **ECA**

LINKS

The NPD Group >

www.npd.com



Program	Broadcaster	Style/Format	Demo	Producer/Distributor
3rd & Bird	Playhouse Disney (Spain) Televisio de Catalunya (Spain) PTS Channel (Taiwan)	mixed-media/50 x 10 minutes	preschool	Little Airplane Productions/BBC Worldwide
Casper's Scare School	VRAK.TV (French-Canada)	CGI/26 x half hours	six to 11	Classic Media/Moonscoop
Ava Riko Teo Dive Olly Dive! (seasons 1 and 2)	TVA (French-Canada)	2-D/65 x seven minutes 2-D/52 x 11 minutes	preschool	Moonscoop, Character Plan, France 5, EBS/Moonscoop Moonscoop
Chuggington	Disney (Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam) TVB (Hong Kong) TV3 (Malaysia) YOYO TV (Taiwan) Truevisions Kids (Thailand)	CGI/52 x 10 minutes	preschool	Ludorum
Fifi and the Flowertots (season 2) Roary the Racing Car (seasons 1 and 2) season 2 season 1	Pwii (France) Astar Media (Taiwan) ZDF (Germany) Pwii (France)	CGI/52 x 10 minutes CGI/104 x 10 minutes	preschool	Chapman Entertainment/Target Entertainment Group
Fluffy Gardens (seasons 1 and 2) Fluffy Gardens Christmas Special	JimJam (Italy, pan-Euro) Treehouse (Canada)	2-D/80 x seven minutes 2-D/1 x half hour	preschool	Monster Animation/Target Entertainment Group
How to be Indie	ABC TV (Australia) Boomerang (Latin America) M-Net (Africa) DeAgostini (Italy) Canal+ Cyfrowy Sp. Zoo (Poland)	live-action/26 x 22 minutes	tweens	The Heroic Film Company/Decode Enterprises
I Dream	Gulli (France)	live-action/13 x half hours	six to 11	19 Entertainment, BBC 1/Target Entertainment Group
The Jungle Book	ABC TV (Australia)	CGI/52 x 11 minutes	six to 11	DQ Entertainment
Kamen Rider Dragon Knight	Cartoon Network (Asia, Australia)	live-action/40 x half hours	boys six to 11	Adness Entertainment
Lockie Leonard (season 2)	Cartoon Network (Latin America, Spain) Nickelodeon (New Zealand) NPO (Netherlands)	live-action/26 x 24 minutes	eight to 13	Goalpost Pictures/Australian Children's Television Foundation
The Revenge Files of Alastair Fury	YLE (Finland)	live-action/13 x 30 minutes	six to 11	Big Brother Productions/Target Entertainment Group
SamSam (season 2) Twisted Whiskers	TeleQuebec France 3 France 5 KRO (The Netherlands) Disney (Italy) Noga (Israel) Al Jazeera (Middle East) Cartoon Network (Latin America)	CGI/52 x 6.5 minutes CGI/52 x 11 minutes	preschool six to 11	Moonscoop, Bayard Jeunesse, Araneo, Tiji, Gulli, France 5/Moonscoop American Greetings Properties, DQE, Moonscoop/Moonscoop

Noddy in Toyland



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War of The World : Goliath



Production : Tripod Entertainment
& Epoch Ink
Genre : Action / Adventure
Format : 90 mins
Language : English
Release Date : June 2010
URL : www.wotw-goliath.com

Pet Squad



Production : Inspidea, Darrall McQueen
& March Entertainment
Genre : Comedy
Format : 52 eps x 11 mins
Language : English
Release Date : 2011
URL : N/A

Saladin : TV Series



Production : Multimedia Development
Corporation (MDEC) & Al
Jazeera Children's Channel
(JCC)
Success Story: Multiple Award Winner from
SICAF'06, TAF'07 and
DIGICON'08
Genre : Action / Adventure
Format : 26 eps x 26 mins
Language : English & Arabic
Release Date : September 2010
URL : www.saladin.tv

Flea Bag



Production : Vision Animation & Moody
Street Kids
Genre : Comedy
Format : 52 eps x 12 mins
Language : English
Release Date : December 2011
URL : N/A

Alamaya:
Garden of Beautiful Creatures



Production : Shock3DI
Success Story: Winner for Best Planning -
SICAF'09
Genre : Fantasy / Action
Format : 100 mins
Language : English
Release Date : March 2011
URL : www.alamayathemovie.com

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Consumer products is no cat-and-mouse game for Tom and Jerry in the South Asian country, where they're attracting more licensees

MARKET WATCH: VIETNAM

THE LICENSING LANDSCAPE LOOSENS UP IN THE LAND OF THE BLUE DRAGON

by gary rusak

**More consumer
spending and less
retail regulation
are helping to
open Vietnam up**

North and East, the small South Asian country has been swept up by the consumerist wave emanating from China. And despite being under the rule of a communist regime, experts say Vietnam is really starting to come into its own as a market for licensed goods featuring Western properties.

With a surging middle class, steady population growth and a GDP in the neighborhood of US\$90 billion, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has started to garner attention as a viable and dynamic market for licensed goods. Hugging the Gulf Of Tonkin and the South China Sea to the West, and bordering China, Laos and Cambodia to the

Lay of the land

With a population of 85 million (an estimated 40% of which is under the age of 25), and a consumer spending rate that rose by 75% over the last decade, the desire for Western goods and properties seems sure to keep expanding. "In 2008, Vietnam had solid GDP growth and a real increase in consumer spending," says Laura Gurski, a partner at Chicago-based retail consulting firm A.T. Kearney, which put the country at the top of its annual Global Retail Development Index in 2008.

The global downturn in 2009, however, caused consumer spending to take a slight step back and slowed Vietnam's economic growth. "They were moving towards a more open market, but then the economy got bad and the only lever they have to go back to is more government regulation," says Gurski. "The Vietnamese government's been going back and forth on accepting direct foreign investment—what it's going to allow and what it won't."



PRESENTS

Little Movers



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That said, hopeful signs still abound. It looks like the government is currently pursuing a course to pull back and ease some restrictions. Notably for consumer products players, regulations permitting foreign-owned retailers to enter the country were instituted on January 1. Obviously, it is too early to see exactly what effect the new legislation will have on foreign investment, but retail analysts see the initial announcement as a positive sign.

Not that it's going to be smooth sailing. Gurski says the government is considering requiring foreign-owned retail outfits to submit their pricing structures, which is causing some of the bigger names to hold off on setting up shop in Vietnam. "Pricing is the core of the retail business and highly confidential," she says. "A market that transparent will discourage Western investment."

But as has been the case with other emerging markets of similar size, once the proverbial toothpaste is out of the tube, it's out for good. So while other sectors like the advertising and banking industries begin to ramp up their Vietnamese operations, licensees and licensors are following suit, looking beyond one-off and promotional deals to establish reliable, day-in/day-out businesses.

"It's just happening right now," says Dave Sharat, VP of marketing and licensing for Asia Pacific at 4Kids Entertainment's Hong Kong office. "People are now trying to engage in deal-making and want to take a more Western approach by setting up offices on the ground there."

Similarly, VP of rights management and licensing Wallace Tay, who works for Warner Bros. Consumer Products' Vietnamese agent Global Brands, says business is just beginning to take off. "We just started [representing WBCP] about six months ago in Vietnam," says Tay. "It's still too early to gauge the business, but we have done about US\$400,000 in deals over the first few months."

Retail and other stumbling blocks

Similar to other emerging markets, retail remains one of the major hurdles in setting up a viable and effective licensing program in Vietnam. While many global retailers are established in the country,

including South Korean superstore Lotte, Japan's Seiyu and Malaysia's Parkson, the landscape is still predominately populated by mom-and-pop, single-store outlets.

"The retail trade is dominated by boutiques," says Abe A. Franco, regional licensing director for licensing agency Carlson Great Gifts Asia Pacific. "Mom-and-pops and traditional wet markets make up easily 95% of the retail landscape," he says.

The lack of retail real estate (the average store has only about 15 feet of floor space) and absence of more centralized retail players hinders mass-market deals. It also makes distribution of licensed good across all categories troublesome. "Modern retail is still new to Vietnam," says Peter Ngo, GM for Global Brands. "The largest department store operator has only five locations throughout Vietnam."

Marilu Corpus, CEO of Click Licensing Asia, which represents Sesame Workshop and Marvel in the region, agrees. "There is a lot of retail development that needs to happen there," says Corpus. "It's a priority to get retail more solidified—we have a few agents on the ground, and maybe in a little while more people will understand just how licensing works."

Another issue facing licensors and their partners in the manufacturing and retail sectors is the trafficking of grey-market goods and prevalence of outright piracy. Many agents, including Corpus, have had to deal head-on with both problems. "In general we have to approach the market with caution," says Corpus. "It's becoming a jumping board for parallel shipments to Japan."

Products licensed and manufactured for the Vietnamese market are regularly being reshipped to Japan. And a grey market has grown up around them, as the Vietnamese goods are sold for a higher price and compete with products legally licensed for Japan, messing with the bottom lines of licensees in both countries. "It causes real stress for the Japanese owner," says Corpus. "So you have to really screen the wholesaler and make sure you have control of it."

The nature of the market also makes it easier for bootleggers to make a living pirating every imaginable kind of

"Vietnam" continued on page 56

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Along with his most elaborate website to date, Thomas will have not one, but two iPhone apps this year

HIT goes full steam ahead on US Thomas program

Iconic preschool IP Thomas & Friends is rounding the bend on its 65th year. And property owner HIT Entertainment's New York-based office is ramping up the IP's presence State-side with the launch of an innovative website and new toy deals to complement the latest CGI series iteration of the blue steam engine.

"I see this as a watershed moment for the brand," says Rick Glankler, SVP of global brand management at HIT Entertainment, in reference to the launch of the most elaborate Thomas website to date, which was unveiled to US consumers last month. (A UK version went live last December.) With more than 230 million page views and 20 million unique visitors to the site across the globe annually, Glankler says the guiding principle behind the redesign was to give parents more reasons to visit the online destination (www.thomasandfriends.com).

"It was a really great opportunity to give the site a new look and offer customization," he says. "It's a much more immersive world for older kids, and we added games and activities for the younger children." Glankler adds that consumer research conducted prior to the redesign revealed that both kids and parents were asking for the inclusion of more information on each inhabitant of Sodor, not just Thomas. They also wanted a smoother navigation experience.

To that end, the new site is embedded with more than 60 new activities, interactive navigation courtesy of Sir Topham Hatt, and a new video player featuring exclusive content and trailers. As well, there is a linked mini-site that lists Thomas & Friends 65th anniversary events and activities that will be localized for users across the UK, Europe and North America.

The launch of the page last month coincided with the release of a new Thomas iPhone app and Facebook page. The iPhone app contains Thomas games and puzzles and will be followed up by a more robust version in March to usher in phase two of the website redesign. Phase two is scheduled to include registration, an updated parents section and a new area called My Station. It features customizable components that will alert children and parents to live entertainment events and programming stunts taking place in their region.

In terms of non-virtual offerings, HIT and recently appointed master toy licensee Fisher-Price are readying an all-new line of die-cast figures, puzzles, games and plush for its debut at Toy Fair in New York this month. "It's the first time it has all resided under one global master toy partner," says Glankler. **GR**

LINKS

- Hit Entertainment > www.hitentertainment.com
- Thomas & Friends > www.thomasandfriends.com

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Scholastic keeping Clifford on charitable track



New York-based Scholastic Media is gearing up for Clifford the Big Red Dog's big 5-0 in 2012 by steering the IP in a decidedly charitable direction. For the second year, the Be Big campaign, which urges fans of all ages to incorporate Clifford's Big Ideas into their everyday lives, is the driver for the property's consumer products and marketing promotions plans.

Clifford's Big Ideas have been incorporated into the canine's long-running series on PBS Kids that's heading into its 10th season. Scholastic Media president Deborah Forte says the segments that stress positive behavior, such as playing fair and respecting others, really resonate with kids and parents. The next step for her team was to figure out how to evolve the Big Ideas further.

The answer came in the formulation of a multi-headed programming event, retail partnership, national publishing program and volunteer contest, which kicked off via a two-week programming stunt on PBS to commemorate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day last month.

The contest provides community grants to those who submit their big ideas, with an emphasis on helping the community. New corporate sponsor American Family Insurance is contributing US\$25,000 to the US\$50,000 Be Big fund, which will be disbursed among worthy applicants.

"The ideas [we've received] have been for everything from building a community playground that allows handicap children to play with those who are not, to planting trees in communities that suffer from high rates of skin melanoma," says Forte. "These are really thoughtful and smart things, and a lot

of them reference episodes of *Clifford* as the inspiration for the idea."

To further support the contest, managed with the help of US nonprofit The HandsOn Network, Scholastic has joined again with FAO Schwarz. The specialty retailer will carry exclusive Be Big Clifford plush, publishing, DVD and puzzle products in its flagship locations in New York and Las Vegas, as well as its boutiques found inside Toys 'R' Us locations throughout the States. "FAO's been our partner from the beginning," says Forte. "It was willing to give us the support that we needed, and we knew we weren't going to get lost there."

A noise-making celebrity event is also scheduled for the FAO Schwarz New York store this month, but details were still under wraps at press time.

"I think the character signifies unconditional love," says Forte, while trying to explain the longevity of the carmine canine. "You can be different, you can be naïve, you can be awkward...people relate to Clifford because everyone feels that at some point in their life, they are the odd one out." **GR**

LINKS

- Clifford the Big Red Dog > www.pbskids.org/clifford/
- Scholastic Media > www.scholastic.com



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CARTOON NETWORK

"Vietnam" continued from page 48

product, as copyright protection laws are vague at best and non-existent at worse. "The legal infrastructure needs to be improved with regards to protection of IPs," asserts Ngo.

What is working...

Despite the hindrances, there is a reason why many of the top IP owners in the world, including Nickelodeon, Disney and Cartoon Network, are setting their sights on Vietnam. According to Franco, licensing in its mature form was introduced to Vietnam in 2005 with Mattel's Barbie leading the way via an influx of the dolls and related merch for the first time.

In 2007, more strides were made as the government-owned-and-operated television regulator allowed Disney Channel to go live, establishing a platform strong enough to drive IP awareness and nationwide licensing programs. Following Disney Channel's launch, Mickey Mouse, Winnie the Pooh and Disney Princess merchandise, including hard-lines, softlines, apparel and toys, started showing up at the country's few retail chains.



4Kids intends to drive awareness for its properties in Vietnam, including Mini Ninjas (above), through publishing rather than traditional TV exposure

Interestingly, one of the most popular kids IPs right now is Warner Bros.' Tom and Jerry. The adversarial cat and mouse have strong recognition, and there's product inspired by the pair available in most categories. However, says WBCP rep Tay, the property's awareness has so far been driven primarily by pirated DVDs of the series that can be purchased in small shops and traditional markets. It's a valuable example of how difficult it is to establish IP ownership in the country.

"Character merchandise is still a relatively new concept in Vietnam," says Franco. "But penetrating the market and develop-

ing regular customers is no longer impossible." For his part, Sharat agrees and is currently designing a publishing program for various 4Kids IPs, rather than relying on TV exposure as a way to introduce them to the local market.

"Publishing will be the way for us to get in," says Sharat. "I can also see back-to-school products working." He adds, "It's a progressive market, and whatever we can do to get in we will do."

Owing to the country's demographic breakdown, Corpus says educational categories, particularly publishing, are the best way to connect with Vietnamese consumers. "They are very much into educational brands," she says. "Especially for products that can teach English, I see that category as having real potential."

Population and media usage


Population	86 million
Kids 0 to 14	21.6 million
People 15 to 64	60.1 million
Birth rate	16.31 births/1,000
GDP per capita	US\$2,800
Population growth rate	0.977%
Telephone landlines	29.5 million
Cell phones	70 million
Internet users	20.8 million
TV stations	67

Source: CIA—The World Factbook 2010

While many Japanese properties are already in the market, many of the agents we spoke to contend that the Vietnamese population is intrigued by Western properties. And as venues for exposure grow through the increased relaxation of TV and internet restrictions, IPs from the West are destined to become more and more popular.

"American properties will eventually have greater success than the Asian-based ones," predicts Tay. "I think there are opportunities for both Asian and

American brands," adds Corpus. "The familiarity of certain brands isn't there yet, but it's coming."

Gurski, who as an analyst necessarily takes a wide view of the situation and the markets in neighboring countries, shares Corpus's bullish outlook on Vietnam's potential. "As a market, it's here to stay," she surmises. "If you want to get into it, the time to do so is probably right now." 

LINKS

4Kids Entertainment >	www.4kidsentertainment.com
A.T. Kearney >	www.atkearney.com
Carlson Great Gifts Asia Pacific >	www.greatgifts-sii.com
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Opinion

The balance of responsibility

Stakeholders on both sides of the commercialization of childhood debate need to up their game

by gary pope

In this age of integration, globalisation and commercial ubiquity, the question of who holds the responsibility for ensuring the well-being of our children has never been more pressing. The UK, for its part, is increasingly establishing the tone in setting guidelines, legislation and regulations that govern the way that modern children are exposed to the commercial world. And it's my hypothesis that we'll see similar types and levels of regulation taking hold around the globe in just a few short years.

Last June, the entire family marketing industry in the UK held its collective breath in anticipation of professor David Buckingham's government-commissioned exploration of the impact of commercialism on children. And held it...And held it.

Buckingham did end up writing the report, but the government didn't publish it last summer. I'm not sure why. At the time, no one seemed to want to tell me. Perhaps the report said something along the lines of, "Commercialism isn't actually breeding a generation of violent idiots, Prime Minister. Actually, in the scheme of things, being a child right now isn't so bad..."

Not to worry. I eventually received my copy by email just before Christmas, and according to Buckingham, there is a really unhelpful polarization occurring with this generation of kids. On the one hand, children are depicted as very media-savvy, and, on the other hand, they're described as the defenseless victims of corporate greed. Surprise, surprise.

But at Kids Industries we spend our working lives talking to parents around the globe. The story is usually the same—parents aren't nearly as fussed about the impact of commercialism on their kids as those in power seem to think they are.

In the hundreds of studies we have undertaken, the parents we interviewed have often said as long as the commercial messages aimed at their children are not exploiting them, there is no

problem. These parents, smartly, talk of balance. They agree that too much is too much, and that a little of something every now and then never hurt anybody. Is the polarization Buckingham speaks of, in fact, evidence that this generation of kids isn't being exploited? Is it possible that we have achieved balance already in our current system without the need to invoke further legislation?

I believe we are almost there. The six or seven stakeholder groups that fall on either side of the commercialization of childhood debate are what keep the commercial world of childhood moving ever-forward to a place where, pretty soon, we'll establish equilibrium. To reach this point, however, each stakeholder group still needs to up its game.

NGO's and nonprofit organizations have a huge responsibility to keep banging the drum for a reduction in commercialization. If it wasn't for the likes of the CCFC (Centre for Commercial Free Childhood), there would be no debate and no coherent unified voice for those who have a different perspective. These organizations need to keep pulling at the shirt-tails of exploitative businesses, as it pushes ethical businesses to the top—and that's got to be a good thing.

Governments need to listen properly, put agendas aside, and do what is right. They invariably say they're doing just that, but lobby groups have very loud (and discreet) voices. Government has the responsibility to protect children when necessary and empower them when possible, which sometimes means affording them the respect necessary to make their own choices.

Teachers It's not their job to teach children how to decode marketing messages. They don't have the time. And yet this is what's being asked of them. The idea being, teach media literacy, and then we'll be able to advertise to children as much as we want. Nonsense. Education is about reading, writing and thinking. Teachers

"The balance of responsibility" continued on page 60



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Getting back into the game

Sesame taps Warner Bros. as master interactive licensee

Sesame Workshop has inked a three-year exclusive deal with Burbank, California-based Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment. The studio offshoot will produce interactive products and video games based on Sesame Street's iconic characters for a variety of platforms, including the iPhone, Nintendo DS and Nintendo Wii.

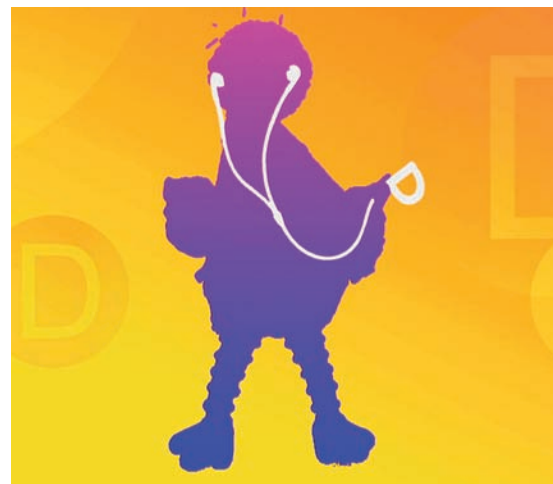
"We're really focused on how Sesame Street should express itself on the console game platform," says Jeffrey Fleishman, assistant VP of media distribution business development at Sesame Workshop. "We are definitely looking to generate games that are related to, and reinforce, our curriculum, and games that can be played by children alone."

Fleishman says The Workshop is re-entering the console games sphere primarily due to the innovations in gaming platforms that make them more suitable for the less-refined motor skills most preschoolers possess.

"It's a unique opportunity for preschool gaming," says Fleishman. "We think it is going to make it a lot easier for preschoolers to use. The new interfaces and input devices in terms of motion and interaction are a natural fit for kids."

It's too early yet to say when the new products will hit retail shelves, or to get an accurate picture of what exactly they will look like. However, the initial product launch will occur in the US, with goods based strictly on Sesame Street IP. International products using characters from the localized versions of the series are slated for later release.

Interestingly, the deal with Warner Bros. sprung out of discussions The Workshop had with Warner Home Video that resulted in a multi-year home entertainment deal for the Sesame Street library last fall. The combo might lead to the dovetailing of home entertainment and interactive game content over the next few years.



D is for digital—Sesame re-enters the console game space

"We are going through the creative process right now," says Fleishman. "I wouldn't be surprised if there were tie-ins with specific titles sometime in the future, but probably not with the initial launch." **GR**

LINKS

- Sesame Workshop > www.sesameworkshop.org
- Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment > www.wbie.com

"The balance of responsibility" continued from page 58

have the responsibility to educate our children, and if they tell us commercialism is hindering education, then we, the industry, have a responsibility to listen.

Parents Perhaps it's not the changing face of childhood but the changing face of parenting that needs more attention. No one teaches us how to parent, and it's different for every generation. Having said that, parents must take responsibility for the media and messaging their children consume. There is an off button on every device.

Public service broadcasters It's not public service if it's commercial, is it? An 11-minute preschool show airing on a pure PSB is about as effective an advertisement as it's possible to create. And getting that show on-air in the first place is likely dependent on a co-pro deal that's absolutely rooted in potential L&M numbers. In the UK, the BBC has a particular responsibility to provide engaging non-commercial content, but it can't do that without acting as an advertising platform. Bit of a dichotomy, I'd say. But does it matter? Probably not, as the Beeb really does provide some of the best media experiences for children in the world.

Big corporations Some CEOs don't mind skirting commercial regulations a little—it's not difficult to see why a cereal manufacturer, for example, would place ads not permitted to air on kids channels in commercial slots on primetime shows that appeal to children. It's not illegal. But is it right? Business has the responsibility to stop going through the motions and just get on with it. Companies need

to realize that an issue as charged as our children's wellbeing makes change absolutely necessary for their success in the coming decade.

Advertising and media agencies have to understand children better. Marketing strategies are very often devised and implemented by people far removed from children, with less than accurate or appropriate data on their target market. These agencies, instead, compensate by endeavoring to steal advantage, exploiting poor legislation or the even more fallible "guidelines" for advertising to kids, which are an easy target. We need to improve this. They have a responsibility to stop advising clients how to circumvent the rules and just do the right thing.

Media is not currently consumed like it was when we were children. That's progress and a jolly good thing, to be frank. But media owners have a responsibility to ensure that their power does not consume childhood itself and commercial gain does not supercede the provision of appropriate entertainment. If it's not good for kids, it's not good for business.

Finally, all of these groups have a responsibility to keep barking from their respective corners. It is only through continued debate and argument that we will progress to a place where we can all agree that we have achieved balance. **NS**



Gary Pope is a director at London-based Kids Industries (www.kidsindustries.com), a strategic family-brand consultancy whose clients include Disney Consumer Products, Pepsico and GlaxoSmithKline. You can reach him via email at gary.pope@kidsindustries.com.

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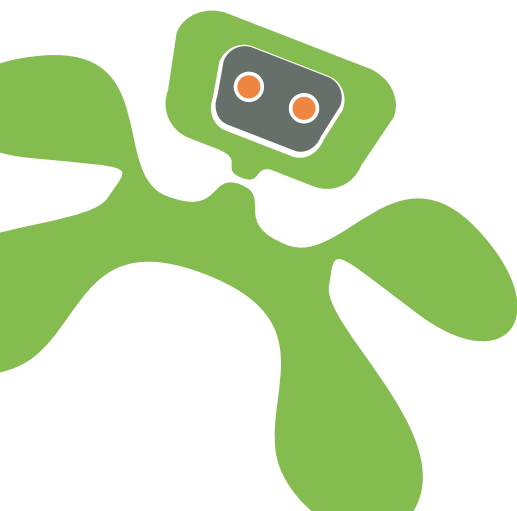


Courtesy of Veer



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THE FAMILY GPS

TRACKING THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF TODAY'S FAMILY

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 REFLECTING TRENDS...TODAY AND TOMORROW

by erin miller

Understanding today's families is a primary goal for Nickelodeon's research team, and the study of the family unit raises a plethora of questions. What defines today's family? What constitutes a family now? How is it different from the past? What brings families closer together or pulls them apart? What do parent and grandparent relationships look like to kids? We're striving to provide the answers in this edition of Kaleidoscope by delving into our *Family GPS* study, which, in partnership with Harris Interactive, examines the internal and external factors affecting the family and the influence exerted by generations past.

To understand the family fully, it's important to look at the role of the three generations that underpin it—kids, parents and grandparents. Kids are growing up in a much more diverse world than their predecessors. In fact, US kids are more diverse than any other age segment, and within the next 20 years, non-Hispanic Caucasians will no longer make up the majority of the country's population.

The composition of today's family is also very diverse. Currently, approximately two-thirds of kids live in two-parent households, one-quarter live in single-parent households and

roughly 13% live in a home without a parent and are being raised by grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. In terms of roles, Mom is the center of the family universe—she is CEO and Dad is happy about that. Mom is the first person kids go to for a hug, for advice and to discuss relationships. Dad, meanwhile, is known in the household as the fun parent and is more emotionally connected to his kids than generations of fathers before him. Additionally, it's time to throw out any tired notions about grandparents. This generation isn't old, feeble or stuck in the past like those of yesteryear. The average age of grandparents is 65, and Baby Boomers are fast moving into the grandparent bracket, with the average age of first-timers currently sitting at 48. Grandparents are also plugged in technologically and are an integral part of the family structure—60% live within 30 minutes of their grandchildren and 40% see them at least once a week, making grandparents very present figures in their kids' and grandkids' lives.

In many ways, the idea of family has long been defined by the term Generation Gap and embodied by an image of the clueless, out-of-touch parent who has no idea what is going

"Kaleidoscope" continued on page 64

"Kaleidoscope" continued from page 63

on in their kids' lives. This was in line with their kids who had no interest in sharing things with their parents. As a result, interests, hobbies and activities of kids and parents in previous generations diverged. In the past 10 years, however, families have seen and experienced things that have helped to close this gap and contribute to their connectedness.

Shared interests are on the rise, coalescing frequently around technology, which serves to unite families rather than divide them as it did in the past. Devices like the iPod have revolutionized the way families learn about and share music, while social media platforms, such as Facebook and MySpace, now serve as entry points for kids and parents to exchange content and connect. Many also happily gather around the Nintendo



Not only did Nintendo's Wii up the tech ante, it's also incited a common interest among US parents and kids, encouraging families to spend more time together

Wii, which has brought gaming into the mainstream. This evolution in shared interests and activities leads us to believe that the Generation Gap, as we know it, has closed up. The family dynamic has changed in such a way that the Generation Gap is no longer relevant—Family Fusion, as we've dubbed it, is the next step in the evolution of families.

Crucial to understanding Family Fusion is looking at how the notion of family closeness is interpreted. While this isn't a new idea, it's never been more important. According to kids, 88% said they "feel close" to their parent(s), 76% said they "feel close" to their sibling(s), 56% said they "feel close" to their grandparent(s), and 42% "feel close" to their aunt(s)/uncle(s)—a trend getting stronger with each generation.

To that end, spending time together is a priority. We found that the top-three family activities are hanging out and talking (83%), watching TV (79%) and listening to music (63%). Parents who participate in these shared activities with their kids at least a few times a week are more likely to feel much closer to their children than parents who engage in these activities with their kids less often. Furthermore, the magnitude of shared tastes continues to grow across the three generations. Six out of 10 kids share similar tastes in movies with their parents, and the majority of families share tastes in TV and music. Shared video game interests across three generations of boys have doubled from 18% to 36%, while

40% of kids we spoke to say they have similar tastes in style and fashion to their parents. Notably, recession-era shopping has moms asking "Is this outfit something my daughter and I can share?"

The story of Family Fusion would not be complete without addressing an apparent shift in attitudes involving social acceptance and tolerance. The younger the generation, the more accepting it is of behavior once perceived as outside of societal norms. A full 71% of kids and parents, for example, agree it's okay for couples to live together before marriage. Majorities across all three generations (88% of kids, 82% of parents, and 70% of grandparents) believe interracial marriage is okay, but grandparents are still more than twice as likely as their grandchildren to feel marriage should only occur between two people of the same race (30% vs. 12%). When it comes to same-sex couples raising

The Generation Gap as we know it has closed up. Family dynamics have changed in such a way that the gap is no longer relevant—Family Fusion is really the next step in the evolution of today's family.

children, kids show the least resistance to the idea. Finally, kids (75%) are more likely than parents (66%) and grandparents (59%) to agree with their parents' overall belief systems.

Having taken this closer examination of how the term Generation Gap has been eclipsed by Family Fusion when it comes to today's crop of kids, parents and grandparents, Nickelodeon will commit to looking towards the future—what the next generation of kids looks like and how relationships between kids and parents will evolve. **N**

This concludes our report on the evolving dynamics of today's families. We will continue our study of family by launching the third wave of *Family GPS* this fall. In the April issue of *KidScreen*, Kaleidoscope will explore humor with kids and teens. For more information, contact Kaleidoscope@nick.com

(Source: Nickelodeon Family GPS, 2009; Harris Interactive, 2009. Quant sample size: N = 2,000 kids and parents, 1,000 grandparents.)

In an effort to keep you in touch with our audience and give a voice to our consumers, the Brand and Consumer Insights Department at Nickelodeon Kids & Family has created Nickelodeon Kaleidoscope. Every month, Kaleidoscope will capture key areas of interest across the kid and family cultural landscape, provide an understanding of attitudes and behaviors, and report on trends and buzz.



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Taylor: Babysitter
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Big Kicks
52x11

Whoop
Dee Do
52x11

Do You Want
To Play
52x11



Good Hood
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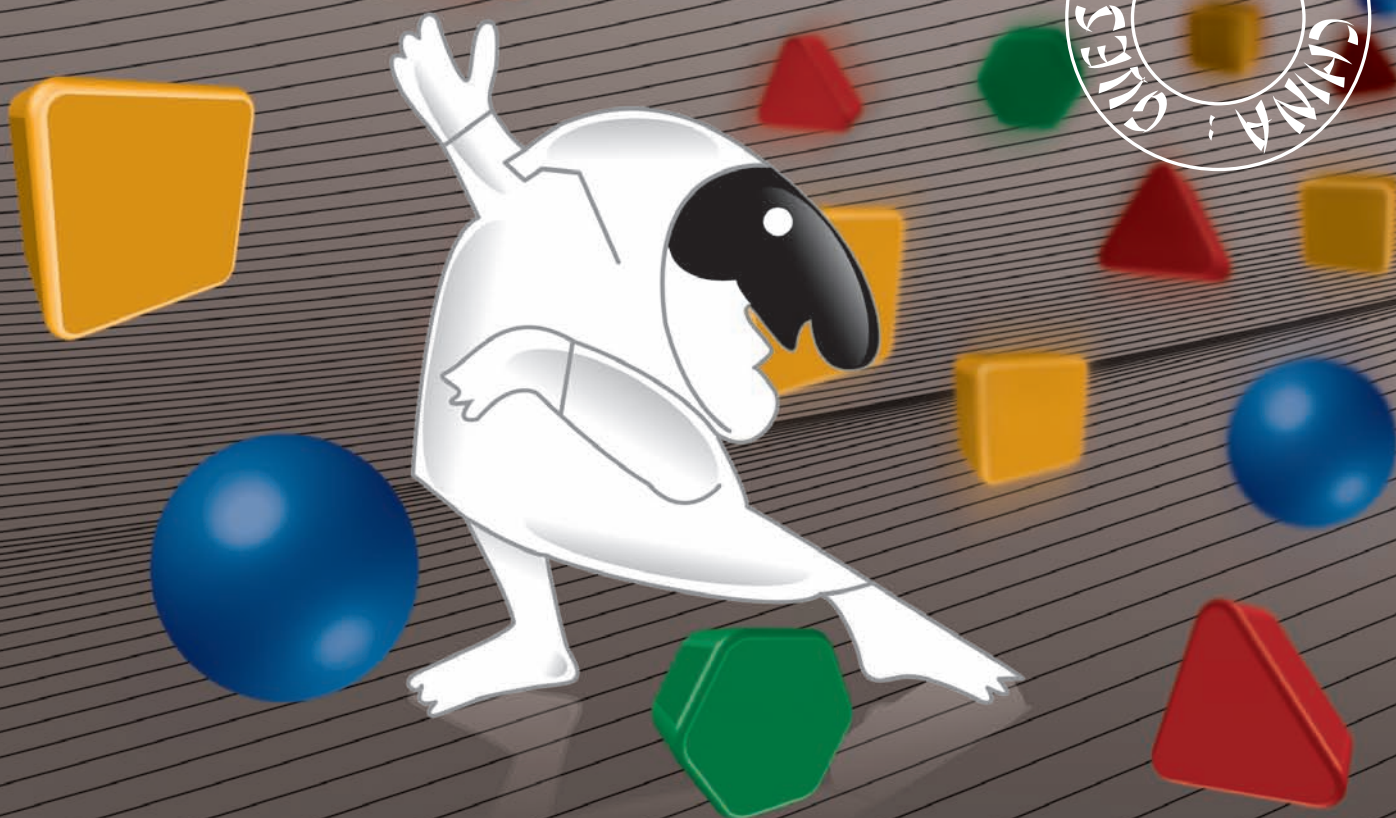
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COOKIE JAR LIFTS THE LID ON NEW VIDEO-STREAMING SITE

by emily claire afan

Touting itself as an exclusive platform, Jaroo is seeking third-party content to pad its pipeline

When Cookie Jar Entertainment acquired DIC in 2008, the company found itself with a vast kids library, much of which had not seen the small screen in awhile. So after studying models employed by popular video streaming sites like YouTube and Hulu, SVP of digital media Kenneth Locker and his team decided to develop a strategic plan to showcase CJ's 5,000-plus animated eps, ranging from 1980s classic *Inspector Gadget* to *Johnny Test*, on

recently launched streaming site Jaroo.com.


As for a business model, Cookie Jar looked to an ad-supported one, which Locker notes has been gaining traction in the kids online video market. "There's so much content for free that it's really hard to make a case, at least initially, to pay for [the site]." But he contends that internet streaming is becoming more attractive to advertisers because they can get precise usage data that's unavailable through TV ratings, like the time a certain group spends watching. (Gorilla Nation Kids is now selling ad space on Jaroo as part of its aggregate network that includes Millsberry.com, the HIT sites and Barbie.com.)

Consumer appeal also comes from a reduced ad insertion rate—a 22-minute ep may have about eight minutes of commercials on TV, but the same ep on Jaroo has just 90 seconds. Locker also made a conscious decision to have a simple, easy-to-navigate site with no games. The idea behind

the site was to create an environment that enhances both video viewing and advertiser reach. "[Games are] a very different business," he says. "I thought it would really take our eye off the ball."

The company is currently looking to launch a Jaroo iApp in Q2, as well as create a premium membership, where consumers could gain access to entire series instead of just five eps at a time. Feedback so far has also been positive, and Locker notes that since parents are sharing the retro content with their kids, he's looking to target influential mommy blogs and non-endemic advertisers.

At press time, Cookie Jar was in discussions with high-profile partners to take on third-party content. "We're a very focused destination for kids video online, so we've had a lot of interest from people with libraries who haven't figured out where to put them," says Locker. "I'd love to get another 4,000 to 5,000 episodes from third parties. There are also some interesting anime and European libraries that have not been shown in North America, for example."

Plans are underway to take Jaroo into other territories, such as Canada, the UK, Australia and Latin America, and regions suited to its French and Spanish programming. Locker is also keeping his eye out for opps to stream original webisode content. "Ideally, we could use it to incubate concepts that we could develop into TV shows or consumer products," he says. 

LINKS

• Cookie Jar Entertainment > www.thecookiejarcompany.com
• Jaroo > www.jaroo.com

Cinekid brings new media to screen circuit

Launched with a focus on film 23 years ago, Amsterdam's annual Cinekid festival now aims to showcase many forms of kids entertainment, and one of its most popular on-site features is its interactive Medialab. A walk through the exhibit, usually teeming with happy, active kids, provides a first-hand glimpse at how the 12-and-under crowd experiences new media and interactive realms. In fact, the forward-thinking installations often point out new ways kids content creators can engage their audiences.

Medialab programmer Joost Broersen looks for installations that will withstand the laying on of thousands of curious little hands and hold visitors' attention during the festival's 10-day run. "We search for projects that offer kids the possibility to explore, or allow them to create things, and they should have a learning curve in that kids can start with it and grow into it," explains Broersen. The Digital Puppetry display from last October's event is one such example. Kids used pink Post-It notes to "catch" animated accessories—hats, dresses, wigs—as they flew by on a screen placed in front of them. They could then "stick" the pieces to digital images of their bodies being projected onto the same screen. "It was like a big treasure chest filled with outfits," says Broersen. "It's a little discovery



The 12-and-under set get hands-on with an array of interactive installments at Cinekid's Medialab

of the magic, and at the same time, the fun of playing with it."

But since child-specific interactive festivals are practically nonexistent—save for the recently announced INplay slated for this May in Toronto, Canada—finding relevant works can be a challenge. Broersen, however, unearths interesting new exhibits by keeping his eyes and ears open, taking word-of-mouth recommendations, networking, and searching blogs and websites for the latest interactive media developments. He even scouts out promising global art school graduates and visits media festivals, such as Ars Electronica in Linz, Austria, where he found Godmode. This project allows kids to draw puppets and place them in a special duplicating machine

that brings the puppets to life by projecting them on the ceiling. And when he can't screen projects first-hand, Broersen evaluates material via video, as he did with a work from Japan that ended up in the program last year.

The effort seems to be paying off—Broersen says the number of kids coming through the Medialab has grown year-on-year, and attendance topped 8,000 kids in 2009. Cinekid is also exploring the possibility of bringing the Medialab to other related festivals outside of Amsterdam, having already experimented with a smaller version at the 5th Caribbean Cinekid Festival in Suriname. **ECA**

LINKS

Cinekid > www.cinekid.nl

Kido'z looks to beef up content offering

When internet guru Gai Havkin sat down in front of the computer with his young daughter and realized she was completely dependent on him for a safe web-surfing experience, he got the idea to create a software solution. What he came up with is a kid-centric browser and web environment named Kido'z (pronounced "kiddos").

Launched last May, Kido'z now boasts users in more than 80 countries and offers content in 30-plus languages. It employs a unique visual-based navigation on its web browser—clicking on an image of Mickey Mouse, for example, will take the user to disney.go.com—to fuel kid empowerment. And last November, the company secured a major distribution deal with manufacturer MSI Computers, which is set to preinstall Kido'z on a whopping six million computers over the next year.

So Havkin is moving forward with an aggressive plan to become the ultimate web browser/environment for kids ages three to seven. He's kicking things off with the launch of a premium service package and the recruitment of former National

Geographic Kids Entertainment president Donna Friedman Meir to build a more robust content offering. Stats gleaned from current usage data reveals that kids are spending 11 hours a month using the basic free-to-download software.

Kido'z Plus (US\$15/month, US\$30/six months, US\$50/year) launched last November and offers parents full reports on their kids' usage patterns, expanded security features and the option to limit daily usage. Havkin and chief of content and strategy Meir are currently looking to lock down some content, including high-end videos and games unavailable elsewhere for free for future premium packages using a revenue sharing model.

As for expanding distribution, the company is trying to crack the netbook market, and at press time, was securing deals similar to its MSI agreement. Havkin adds that making deals with internet service providers (i.e. Comcast) or other online portals, such as Yahoo!, to serve as their preschool solution is on the priority list. **ECA**

LINKS

Kido'z > <http://kidoz.net>

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Toy Fair 2010



Nickelodeon & Viacom Consumer Products explores new Dora design directions **p72**

Robotic toy sales reboot **p80**

Explorers wanted

Nickelodeon & Viacom Consumer Products unveils bold designs sure to push Dora in new directions as it celebrates her 10th anniversary

by **Iana Castleman**

When *Dora the Explorer* premiered on Nickelodeon US in August 2000, no one could have predicted that nearly 10 years after the fact new episodes would still be in production, and Dora's ground-breaking language curriculum would be helping more preschoolers learn English than Spanish in 140 territories around the globe. The series, in fact, has proved to be one of the network's biggest hits, and in creating a character that kids, particularly preschool girls, identify with and want to befriend, Nickelodeon also spawned an international consumer products star.

Heading into her second decade, Dora is moving into rarified CP territory—that of the evergreen property. So far, merchandise based on *Dora the Explorer* has generated more than US\$11 billion at retail worldwide, with master toy licensee Fisher-Price selling 65 million-plus units of Dora product and counting. Dora's audience also regenerates every two years or so as new groups of preschoolers find her, an ideal situation for maintaining a healthy merch program. But Nickelodeon & Viacom Consumer Products isn't taking any chances. "We have to keep longstanding retail and licensing partners excited," says NVCP president Leigh Anne Brodsky. "We need to stay relevant to the next wave of Dora fans."

So using the occasion of the adventurous little Latina's 10th anniversary, NVCP's unveiling a new set of property parameters, a

refreshed core Dora style guide and no fewer than four design extensions that stretch the character's reach from infant products right through to edgy teen fashion. What's in Dora's new look book? Let's explore.

Drilling down to Dora's DNA

After taking Nick's number-one icon *SpongeBob SquarePants* through a design transformation for his 10th anniversary in 2009, NVCP's international creative team, led by Nickelodeon SVP of global creative strategy Gary Bonilla, turned its attentions to Dora. The team conducted consumer research—looking into how kids viewed the character and where there might be room to grow—over an 18-month period and spent the last eight months crafting the new designs and style guide.

But what really got the ball rolling, says Bonilla, was a re-examination of Dora's DNA. The new designs needed to reflect the character's drive to discover and explore the natural world. The resulting tagline "Explorers Wanted" gets to the heart of the property. From there, the creative team derived three guiding principles that underpin all Dora designs and product applications moving forward. The first is to consider whether or not the new design/product leads to the discovery



Dubbed Adventure Dora, the property's core design style is getting a refresh, with character art that's more three-dimensional and active



Discovering Dora

- Nearly 26 million people in the US watch *Dora the Explorer* every month, including seven million preschoolers.
- *Dora* ranks among the top-three series across all Nickelodeon shows on its global channels.
- The property has generated more than US\$11 billion at worldwide retail.
- *Dora the Explorer* currently airs in 140 territories in 28 languages.
- In Australia, *Dora* is the highest-rated preschool show on commercial TV, attracting 150,000 viewers per episode.
- France is the second-largest consumer products market for Dora, next to the US, with 85 licensees.
- Fisher-Price has sold 65 million Dora the Explorer toys worldwide to date.
- French publishing house Albin Michel has sold more than 10 million Dora books.
- More than 20 million Dora DVDs and 50 million books have sold worldwide since launch.
- The show's main characters were initially animals before Dora, the girl we know, was created.
- In 2005, Dora was the first Latina character to appear in the historic Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.
- *Dora the Explorer* is a Peabody winner, NAACP winner, two-time Property of the Year winner, and a 12-time Daytime Emmy nominee.
- The Dora the Explorer brand has graced a variety of innovative and quirky products, including milk, apples, needlework sets and fish tanks!

of something new. Secondly, any new application must give a nod to Dora's culture and the fiesta-inspired colors of Latin America.

And finally, designers and licensees should make sure the product helps teach the language specific to the market it's addressing.

As for how the guiding principles work, let's turn to the refresh of the design program that targets Dora's core market, girls ages two to five. Dubbed Adventure Dora, this grouping uses a 3-D look for both Dora and her surroundings. Dora's now more active, and her poses won't appear static on product; she'll be depicted making big movements, rather than just standing or pointing at a map. The 3-D feel will also manifest itself in the inclusion of things like appliqué lady bugs being placed on top of a 2-D design on a backpack. Discovery would be driven, for example, by the unexpected printing of the underside of a t-shirt with an extra pattern or design. The color palette, meanwhile, has been opened up to include vibrant aquas, teals and reds—hues outside of Dora's traditional lilac, pink, orange and green theme. And, for the first time, geometric patterns are being used with Dora's signature florals to provide more contrast on products, especially home décor lines.

Exploring new territory

Given the mandate to expand product and demographic reach, NVCP's creative team also outlined four new directions for the property—Baby Dora (infants), Explorer Boots (older girls, tweens), Dora Chic (tweens) and Just Dora (tweens/teens). Still in the exploratory stage, the designs are really intended to give retailers and licensees something to think about.

Perhaps the closest to heading to market is Baby Dora. Bonilla contends that even though this generation of moms didn't grow up with Dora, awareness of the character is very high. "Moms know their kids will be watching Dora," he says. "So why can't we create something for moms to begin that experience?" And Brodsky says specialty Dora Bébé infant products made a few years ago were well received and intends to ready a limited infant apparel line after the 2010 celebration.

Aiming to appeal to tweens, Dora Chic is a candy-colored interpretation of her world that's particularly suited to stationery, apparel and interactive applications



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Los Angeles

These new Dora Baby designs are built around oversimplified (and very cute) 2-D interpretations of Dora, her sidekick Boots and their surrounding environment. Bonilla says they immediately lend themselves to softlines like apparel and footwear, but also notes early-learning video game apps are under consideration.

Explorer Boots puts that mischievous monkey in the spotlight for the first time. While playing to modern-day tweens' sense of what's stylish, these predominantly pink-and-purple girly graphics also function as an aspirational design space for the five to eight set. "Five-year-olds will look at these and think, 'It's my older-girl moment,'" says Bonilla. He adds it's also a comfortable design statement for moms who don't think their girls are ready for older-skewing properties. The designs invoke the cute factor (or Kawaii) present in Japanese properties and could inspire stylish accessories to start. Additionally, Explorer Boots opens the doors to look at another character, says Bonilla. He's got his eye on Swiper.



Baby Dora (top and middle) and Explorer Boots (left) are just two more design groups in NVCP's new Dora style guide that are intended to stretch Dora's demographic appeal



Moving into tween territory, there's Dora Chic—a candy-colored interpretation of Dora's world that suits apparel, accessories, stationery and video game applications. Bonilla feels the fun designs would work particularly well at specialty and high-end.

Finally, really stretching the boundaries is Just Dora. It's a hip, edgy design statement, where predominant black and gray graphics are injected here and there with bright color. Targeting fashion-conscious teens, it still reflects the IP's guiding principles, using little and unexpected floral details. What makes it work, says Bonilla, is the stylized interpretation of Dora—her enigmatic smile and posture, in which her belly sticks out, adds a lightness and playfulness to the design.



The question, of course, is whether or not tweens and teens, who are usually desperate to be perceived as older than they actually are, will want to embrace their former preschool heroine in such an open fashion. Is the market ready for older-skewing Dora CP programs?

On the international side, where Dora launched a few years after the US and first-time CP programs are just rolling out in territories such as Spain and Poland, SVP & MD of NVCP International Jean Philippe Randisi readily admits tween-targeted product won't be in the offing for at least two years. State-side, however,

Bonilla and Brodsky think it could be time as the first generation of Dora fans enters its teens.

"Dora's very appreciated for the role she played in their lives," says Bonilla, adding his team's research further revealed Dora is a source of nostalgia and comfort for older girls, which could translate into a solid demand for product. For her part, Brodsky says Dora can stretch to appeal to the older demos, and NVCP is using the new looks as an inspirational roadmap. "We constantly have to challenge partners to grow, and this is another way we're trying to take a leadership role—making sure we're fashionable, on-trend and doing things that are unexpected."

Product plans

NVCP and toy partner Fisher-Price started testing Dora's demographic elasticity last year in the US with the launch of brand extension Explorer Girls. Led by a high-tech doll that targets girls five to eight, Explorer Girls depicts an older Dora who's moved into the city and sets about discovering her new surroundings. While the doll met with some criticism before it was ever unveiled, according to Fisher-Price VP of marketing Gina Sirard, its initial fall 2009 release met sales expectations and new iterations of the doll will hit US retail later on in 2010. "The line will continue to grow with the release of new content from Nickelodeon," she says,

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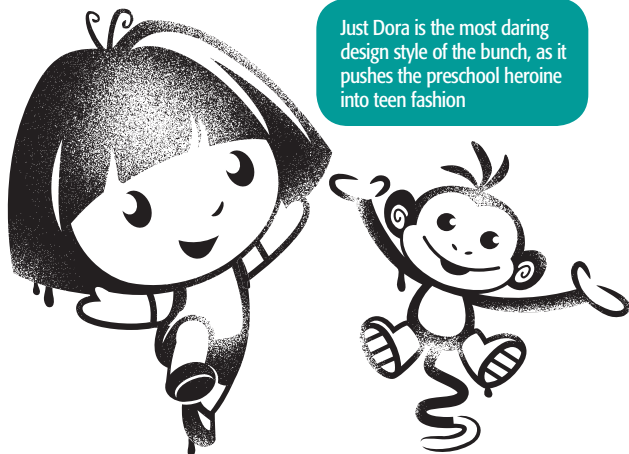
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Contact in Kidscreen

Gaston Cami
VP of International Sales and Coproductions
gcami@illusionstudios.com.ar / Mobile (+1) 310 990 8321

Solveig Madsen
Management & Development
smadsen@illusionstudios.com.ar

Maria Laura Rodriguez
Animation Project Manager
lrodriguez@illusionstudios.com.ar



Just Dora is the most daring design style of the bunch, as it pushes the preschool heroine into teen fashion

adding Explorer Girls will be putting on a rock concert for charity, which Fisher-Price will support with more music and fashion. A more extensive publishing program based on the brand offshoot, says Brodsky, is also in the works.

Core Adventure Dora, however, is the primary focus of Dora's 10th anniversary. Brodsky says consumers can expect Nickelodeon, NVCP and its partners to rally around the property with planned programming tentpoles, retail and marketing promotions similar in scope to the 2009 celebration of *SpongeBob*. Product in the US will sport new, unified packaging, and Fisher-Price is releasing a 10th anniversary version of its all-time bestselling Dora item, the We Did It doll. This redux has Dora teaching kids her iconic victory dance, among other features. The second toy driver, Dora's All Seasons Dollhouse, Sirard promises, is the most realistic model to date.

International programs, meanwhile, hold the most growth potential for the established property. While the noise being generated in the US is bound to boost sales in that territory, plans are just getting underway to launch product for the first time in Spain, Poland and the Nordic region. In those countries, Randisi says, licensees will roll out product sporting the latest Adventure Dora designs. He's also in the process of mapping out tentpole and retail campaigns for each Euro territory, along with those to expand retail channels. He's particularly confident about the pan-national appeal of the reborn style guide, as his team worked closely with its US-based counterparts. "The creative process involved different markets and regions; the designs weren't invented in Times Square," he says. "The assets created truly match the needs of our different markets." **N**

LINKS

- Fisher-Price > www.fisherprice.com
- NVCP > www.nickelodeon.com

Creating Dora

In a chat with *KidScreen* Editor Lana Castleman, Valerie Walsh—co-creator of *Dora the Explorer* with fellow ex-Nick exec Chris Gifford—dished on Dora's origins, how she keeps the 10-year-old show fresh, and why kids are the ultimate arbiters of the character's fate.

Where did you and Chris get the idea for Dora?

Chris and I were working at Nick Jr., developing projects with external creators. The VP of the department at the time asked us to develop an original idea. We came up with 100 ideas and eventually got to one by sifting through them for weeks and months. It was a great concept, but design-wise it didn't feel new and fresh. Dora was supposed to be a very inexpensive live-action show, but we decided to take the animation route.

What preschool needs weren't being served at the time?

I'd been looking at a lot of CD-ROMs for kids and we knew they loved the interactive pieces. And we'd been working with some child psychologists who said putting together a story with those interactive elements would be very powerful. So the idea of trying to imbed educational curriculum into a story that kids then felt they were going to push forward was the real driving force for the show's conceit.

Are you still involved in writing Dora, day-to-day?

Yes. Chris and I oversee all the writing and go to every writer's meeting. And we've made it a mission to find new writers. It is a challenge after this many episodes to come up with something to make it feel like we're not retelling the same story, especially when there's such a set format. We've got writers coming in here who've written for *CSI* and said this is one of the toughest things they've ever done.

Has Dora changed?

Each season we give ourselves a challenge so that it feels as if there's something new added to her, but her core personality has stayed the same. She's very earnest and loving and kind to her friends. Last season we had a lot of input from kids who said, 'I'm friends with Dora.' So we decided that we would introduce a new friend of Dora's every episode. This season, we added a health and wellness goal.

Where do you look for inspiration at this point?

For me, I now have a two-year-old. I don't have to look too far. But a lot of it comes from watching kids and being in tune with how they go about their day and the obstacles they face.

Do you use a lot of research on child development?

We go out with our stories and tell them in schools, so we get a lot of our own research. We also have a lot of advisors and have seminars at the start of every season where we discuss what the trends are in learning. But the ultimate producer who says yay or nay is the child.

You test the episode ideas in front of a live kids audience?

Yes. We make it into a storybook, take it to schools and daycare centers, and have someone read it to them in Dora's voice before we go to script. We're trying to prevent the need to reanimate sequences or do retakes. We want to know upfront if they like the story. Entire stories have been shelved because of a bad reaction.

What was your most memorable rejection?

I had this crazy idea for a story about a runaway plant. I ran across the plant on one of the research trips to Latin America that we do before the season starts. I found it interesting. Imagine a plant that runs away and is out of control and has to be returned to Isa's garden. The kids, however, found it very disturbing, especially the fact that Dora lost control and the plant was on its own. It hit something primal in the kids and I didn't get a lot of happy responses. They have the ultimate say and we shelved it.



Dora co-creator
Valerie Walsh

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Reboot

A 23% spike in 2009 sales sparks renewed interest in robotic toys

by gary rusak

When it comes to US toy sales, and those of most consumer products for that matter, there were few bright lights in 2009. So it's surprising that one of the categories that's grown despite the economic storm raging at retail is one that at first glance seems antithetical to the budget-conscious ethos currently driving US consumer behavior. Yes, the robots may be taking over.

Robotic toys have come some way since WowWee introduced its game-changing Robosapien in 2004. Priced at under US\$99, the first cost-effective, mass-produced robotic plaything went on to sell four million units and revolutionized the consumer robot category. Six years later, the category seems to be providing fertile ground for expansion and innovation.

According to The NPD Group's toy and video games analyst Anita Frazier, the robotic/interactive playmates category generated US\$210 million in sales at US retailers in the 12 months between October 2008 and 2009, experiencing 23% growth over

the same time period the year prior. It's a sizable



Upstart Bossa Nova's Prime-8 (above) is looking to make tracks at US retail after scoring sales in Europe, while Big Foot the Monster (below) from Fisher-Price aims to tickle preschoolers' funny bones

bump when, at press time, the toy industry was on track to mark a 2% decrease in overall sales for the year. Manufacturers, naturally, are keen to capitalize, and visitors to Toy Fair, taking place in New York this month, should expect to see a number of innovative takes on the category.

For its part, WowWee is introducing Roboscooper. The dumptruck-like gizmo incorporates all the technological advances made over the past several years, including the ability to detect objects lying in its path and pick them up. However, it's telling how Amy Weltman, WowWee VP of marketing, chooses to describe the new offering. "He's become a playmate," she says. "He's friendly; he's interactive in terms of speech and actions."

And when it hits major retail this fall, Roboscooper will also have two more notable features—a price-point under US\$80 and a younger target demo. Moving away from the established US\$99 benchmark, WowWee is pushing the SRP down to US\$79.99 and targeting a much younger demo than

Robosapien did. "This is something that has always been in our brand plans," says Weltman. "Initially our target was older, but now we are re-directing our marketing efforts to an almost preschool-age market. Our message is probably less tech and more friendly play and interactivity."

The migration of the robot category down to the preschool demo is something that major toyco's are also pursuing. Fisher-Price, for example, is following up its 2006 Imaginext Mega T-Rex with Big Foot the Monster (US\$99) this summer. With deals to place the new product on shelves at major US retailers such as Toys 'R' Us, Target and Walmart, the robot has been designed specifically for preschoolers.

Big Foot can walk forward and backwards and is controlled with an easy-to-use remote. It can also laugh, pound its fists, raise its arm, sleep and play catch. "Instead of making our robotic toys look like robots, we design a cool character and really focus on building personality," says Shehnaz Safiuddin, director of marketing for Fisher-Price.

It's a familiar refrain for the category and one of the factors pushing product forward. In

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terms of technology, manufacturers and designers are looking for technological advances that will enhance the hard-to-define notion of personality, which seems to be the Holy Grail for younger-targeted robots.

"The key is to show parents and grandparents the value of the product and the long-lasting, grow-with-me nature of these sorts of items," says Safiuddin.

Of course, category game changers often seem to come out of nowhere and would-be robotic toy makers are now entering the market with technological chops and more modest budgets. One case in point is Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania-based Bossa Nova Robotics, which is making its first official Toy Fair appearance this year. The small firm has developed and marketed two complete lines of consumer robots under the I Love Robots banner.

Skewing towards boys eight and up is Bossa Nova's Prime-8, a wheeled, somewhat temperamental gorilla that can run on

numerous surfaces and perform a variety of tricks. "He can tap dance if you clap, and if you wake him up while he's sleeping, there is a short circuit that makes him upset," says Sarjoun Skiff, Prime-8 inventor and partner at Bossa Nova. "He has a wide range of activities to encourage



WowWee, inventor of game-changer Robosapien, is following up 2009 'bot Roborover (above) with vehicle-inspired Roboscooper, and Pinguish-spouting Penbo (left) is hoping to trade on the appeal of penguins to younger kids

interaction and for quality," says WowWee's Waltman, explaining that prices upwards of US\$129 haven't hampered sales of robotic products for the likes of Hasbro and Mattel.

Safiuddin, from Fisher-Price, agrees.

"Parents are certainly thinking twice about spending," he says. "But we have found that when a toy is really cool and interactive, parents may choose to buy one for Christmas or birthdays rather than spend the same amount on more things." Safiuddin points to the success of Fisher-Price's own US\$140 Spike the Ultra Dinosaur, released in 2008, as a prime example of a relatively higher-priced item finding success in tight economic times.

"Robot toys are inherently more expensive simply because the technology is more expensive," adds Bossa Nova's Skiff. "But you play with it for a longer time, and that is a value-add. Preserving the low cost is challenging, but we have a proven product now so we are excited to enter the US market with that cost structure."

To see where the roughly quarter-billion-dollar category might be headed, one can look to upstart Sandbox Innovations, based in New York. Chiefly a designer of robots for search-and-rescue missions, the small shop is looking to find a partner to take its patent-pending robot technology to retail shelves.

"We have basically taken a US\$70,000 robot and turned it into what could be a US\$60 product at retail," says founder Joel Weingarten. "We have pushed the technology into a different space in terms of interactivity and locomotion, and now we are looking for a traditional licensing deal."

The prototype that resembles an insect is unique in that it's a legged creature that can scamper over any terrain and is equipped with advanced sensors that propel real-time interactions. It can follow a child and react to sounds in an eerily natural manner. **N**

a mastery play pattern—you learn how to play with him to get the best results."

And for kids under eight, there's Penbo. The furry, pear-shaped penguin can play five games, including hide and seek, speaks a unique dialect known as "Pinguish" and even comes with a surprise egg that hatches a smaller robot with whom it can interact.

The initial versions of Prime-8 and Pembo retail for US\$99 and US\$69 respectively, and have been sold across Europe, the UK and Russia. Bossa Nova is now approaching North American retailers for distribution, putting an SRP of US\$79.99 on Prime-8.

What's enabling manufacturers to maintain price-points that far exceed the under-US\$25 sweetspot for toys is the cool factor. "Parents are looking for



LINKS

• Bossa Nova Robotics >	www.bnrobotics.com
• Fisher-Price >	www.fisher-price.com
• The NPD Group >	www.npd.com
• Sandbox Innovations >	www.sandboxinnovations.com
• WowWee >	www.wowwee.com

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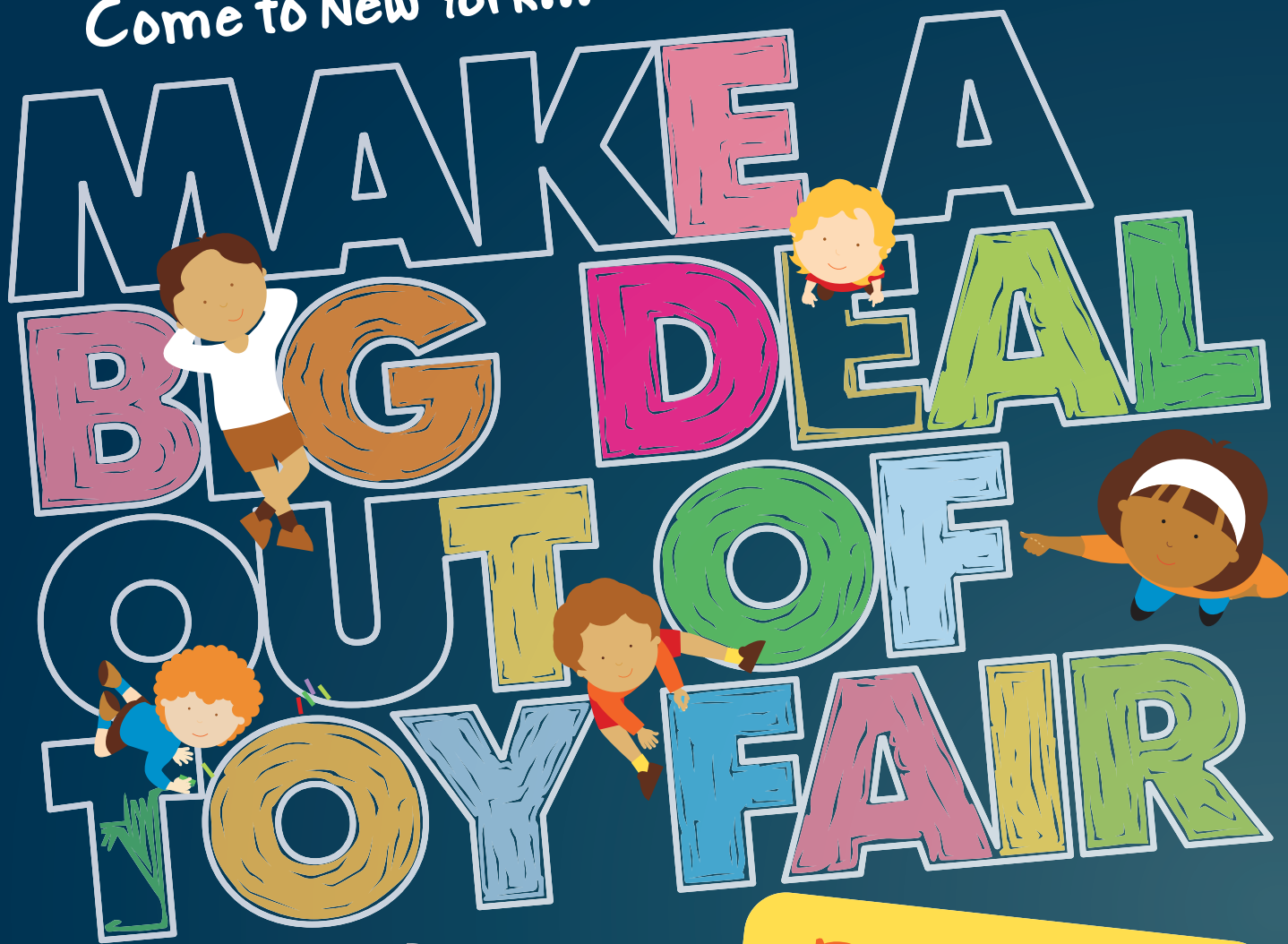
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FIRST TAKE

Edgy Depp humor gives Rango's CP program personality

by kate calder

With the plethora of prequels, sequels and films based on nostalgic brands populating the kids silver-screen space, it's not getting any easier to bow an original animated movie. Paramount, along with CGI animation studio Industrial Light Magic (ILM), however, is trying to forge new territory with *Rango* on-screen and at retail.

Scheduled to hit US theaters in March 2011, the film is introducing a brand-new character to kid movie-goers and Paramount is attempting to mount a comprehensive merchandising program around the property. The studio isn't leaving it all up to chance, though. It's tapped one of Hollywood's hottest talents, Johnny Depp, to voice lead character Rango, a clever and resourceful pet chameleon.

The quirky story kicks off with a family road trip in which Rango's terrarium is unceremoniously dumped on the side of the highway. Parched and disoriented, the lizard makes his way to a small Western town in search of water. There he meets with intimidating and tough townsfolk and adopts the persona of a hardened outlaw as a defense mechanism. His no-nonsense attitude—which is really all an act—meets with such admiration that the townies elect him as their mayor. The film also reunites Depp with *Pirates of the Caribbean* director Gore Verbinski, who hatched the idea for the movie with Depp in mind.

Paramount Consumer Products executive director of marketing and retail development Darren Kyman is overseeing the L&M rollout. He says the boy-targeted movie is infused with Depp's signature dry-witted dialogue and mature social references that should appeal to an older set. "The style guide that we're in the midst of creating right now is a little bit more edgy and cool than those for your traditional animated family films."

With that in mind, Paramount plans to drive the program with a line of collectibles, video games and a publishing, following up with boys and men's apparel and social expressions.




Paramount is planning to build an aged-up merch program around *Rango*'s quick-witted chameleon, voiced by Hollywood heavyweight Johnny Depp

"We're not looking for a traditional boys action figure toy line," says Kyman. "We're looking for a company that will take some of the unique traits of this character and incorporate them into a collectible toy that might never have been done before."

To that end, Kyman's team is amassing *Rango* visual assets for Toy Fair in New York, where the first order of business is securing a collectible/toy partner.

In a first for Paramount, Kyman says a video game is being developed in-house, which will allow his team to work closely with the collectible partner and incorporate particular elements into the game and vice versa.

Licensees already on-board include Art Box Entertainment (trading cards), Rubie's (costumes), DecoPac (cake decorating) and Amercian Greetings (social expressions), and product is being prepped for launch at US specialty retailers a few weeks in advance of the film's release. 

LINKS

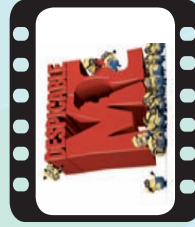
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FIRST TAKE

Title & Primary Target Audience	Release Date	Story Line (A—animation, L—live action)	Studio & Distributor	Licensing Contact	Promotions Contact	Licensees & Promotional Partners
The Last Airbender						
Family	July 2, 2010	(L) M. Night Shyamalan directs this feature version of Nickelodeon animated series, <i>Avatar: The Last Airbender</i> , set in a world where human civilization is divided into four nations: water, earth, air and fire. The Fire Nation is waging a ruthless, oppressive war against the other three nations. Only the film's hero, young avatar Aang—the last Airbender—has the ability to manipulate all of the elements and bring all the nations together.	Nickelodeon/Paramount Pictures	Leigh Anne Brodsky, president, Nickelodeon & Viacom Consumer Products, 212-258-8000	Chris Cerbo, director of global promotions, Paramount, 323-956-8105 chris_cerbo@paramount.com	Licensing and promo opps: Spin Master (toys). Also looking for partners across categories including beverages, electronics, packaged goods and travel.
The A-Team						
Tween boys and men 18 to 34	June 11, 2010	(L) Resurrecting the 1980s TV show of the same name, <i>The A-Team</i> follows the exploits of a colorful team of former special forces soldiers who were set up for a crime they didn't commit. Going rogue, they utilize their unique talents to try and clear their names and find the true culprit. Liam Neeson and Bradley Cooper star.	Twentieth Century Fox	Robert Marick, EVP of Fox L&M, 310-369-2207, robert.marick@fox.com	Robert Marick, EVP of Fox L&M, 310-369-2207, robert.marick@fox.com	Licenses: Jazwares (action figures, vehicles, electronics). Apparel being finalized.
The Karate Kid						
Family	June 11, 2010	(L) Jayden Smith, Will Smith's son, plays 12-year-old Dre Parker, who could've been the most popular kid in Detroit, but his mother's latest career move has landed him in China. With no friends in a strange land, Dre has nowhere to turn but maintenance man Mr. Han who is secretly a master of kung fu.	Sony Pictures/Columbia Pictures	Juli Boylan, SVP, Sony Pictures Consumer Products, 310-244-4155, juli_boylan@spe.sony.com	Mary Goss Robino, SVP of global marketing partnerships, Sony Pictures Consumer Products, 310-244-3999, mary_robino@spe.sony.com	Licenses: Sony is currently looking for partners to fill in ancillary categories.
Despicable Me						
All ages	July 9 2010	(CGI) In a happy suburban neighborhood surrounded by white picket fences sits a black house with a dead lawn. Unbeknownst to the cheerful suburbanites, a vast secret hideout lies beneath the neighborhood eyecore. Here, Gru (voiced by Steve Carell) and his minions are planning the biggest heist in the history of the world—stealing the moon (yes, the moon!).	Universal Pictures	Cindy Chang, VP of global business development, Universal Studios Consumer Products Group, 818-777-2067	Stephanie Cohen, VP of Universal Studios Partnerships, 818-777-5789	Licenses: D3Publisher (video games), Little Brown (publishing), Namco (iPhone, iPod game app), Hallmark (stationery/social expressions), Hybrid (apparel), Aquarius (posters, calendars), Ceaco (puzzles), Rubies (costumes), DecoPac (bakery goods), Toy Factory (amusement plush).
The Sorcerer's Apprentice						
Family	July 16, 2010	(L) Balthazar Blake is a master sorcerer in modern-day Manhattan trying to defend the city from his arch nemesis, Maxim Hovath. Balthazar can't do it alone, so he recruits Dave Stutler, a seemingly average guy who demonstrates hidden potential as his reluctant protégé. The sorcerer gives his unwilling accomplice a crash course in the art and science of magic and together, these unlikely partners work to stop the forces of darkness.	Walt Disney Pictures	Lisa Avent, VP/GM global franchise development, Disney Consumer Products, lisa.avent@disney.com	Don Gross, VP of global promotions, Buena Vista Pictures Marketing, 818-560-7477, don.gross@disney.com	Licensing and promo opps: Disney is currently seeking partners in a variety of categories.



Cats and Dogs: Revenge of Kitty Galore						
Family	July 30, 2010	(LA) The ongoing war between the canine and feline species is put on hold when they join forces to thwart a rogue cat spy with her own sinister plans for conquest. One of the cat agents has gone rogue after being chased into a vat of bikini cream by a lead dog agent. The rest of the cats must take her down.	Warner Bros.	Domestic: Karen McTier, EVP, domestic licensing and worldwide marketing, Warner Bros. Consumer Products, 818.954.3008, karen.mctier@warnerbros.com International: Jordan Sollitto, EVP, new initiatives & international licensing, Warner Bros. Consumer Products, 818.954.7807, jordan.sollitto@warnerbros.com	Domestic: Karen McTier, EVP, domestic licensing and worldwide marketing, Warner Bros. Consumer Products, 818.954.3008, karen.mctier@warnerbros.com; International: Jordan Sollitto, EVP, new initiatives & international licensing, Warner Bros. Consumer Products, 818.954.7807, jordan.sollitto@warnerbros.com	Licensing and promo opps: Pet brands and back-to-school a priority, global QSR on board.
Guardians of the Ga'Hooole						
Family	September 24, 2010	(CGI) Based on the first three installments of the bestselling series of fantasy books about a band of owls, the film follows Soren, a young owl enthralled by his father's epic stories of the Guardians of Ga'Hooole. The mythic band of winged warriors fought a great battle to save all of owlkind from the evil Pure Ones. Father and son travel to the Great Ga-Hooole Tree to join a community of owls who rise nightly to perform noble deeds and overcome the evil that lurks in their midst.	Warner Bros./Village Roadshow Pictures	Domestic: Karen McTier, EVP, domestic licensing and worldwide marketing, Warner Bros. Consumer Products, 818.954.3008, karen.mctier@warnerbros.com; International: Jordan Sollitto, EVP, new initiatives & international licensing, Warner Bros. Consumer Products, 818.954.7807, jordan.sollitto@warnerbros.com	Domestic: Karen McTier, EVP, domestic licensing and worldwide marketing, Warner Bros. Consumer Products, 818.954.3008, karen.mctier@warnerbros.com; International: Jordan Sollitto, EVP, new initiatives & international licensing, Warner Bros. Consumer Products, 818.954.7807, jordan.sollitto@warnerbros.com	Licensing and promo opps: Interested in back-to-school categories.
Megamind						
Family	November 5, 2010	(CGI) Megamind is the most brilliant supervillain in the world has ever known. And the least successful. Over the years, he has tried to conquer Metro City in every imaginable way. Each attempt, a colossal failure thanks to the caped superhero known as Metro Man, an invincible hero until the day Megamind actually kills him in the throes of one of his botched evil plans. Suddenly, Megamind's a supervillain without a superhero and realizes that achieving his life's ambition is the worst thing that ever happened to him. Megamind decides that the only way out of his rut is to create a new opponent, who promises to be bigger, better and stronger than Metro Man ever was.	DreamWorks Animation/Red Hour Films	Domestic: Brad Woods, head of licensing and retail marketing, DreamWorks Animation, 818-695-7011; International: Sheila Clarke, head of international consumer products, DreamWorks Animation, 818-695-7542	Theatrical promotions: Linda Kehn, DreamWorks Animation, 818-695-7569; Home video promotions: David Bynder, DreamWorks Animation, 818-695-7031	Licensees: Ape Entertainment, Dalmation Press, DecoPac, Freeze, Hallmark, Penguin Books, THQ, ToyQuest. DreamWorks Animation is also seeking partners in other select categories.
Rapunzel						
Family	November 12, 2010	(A) In this new telling of the classic fairy tale, Rapunzel and her storybook world are being given a musical comedy slate and CGI remodel, complete with the iconic tower, an evil witch, a gallant hero and, of course, the mysterious girl with long golden tresses. Voiced by Mandy Moore, Rapunzel is now an imaginative and determined teen, who takes off on a hilarious, hair-raising escapade with the help of a dashing bandit.	Walt Disney Pictures	Lisa Avent, VP/GM global franchise development, Disney Consumer Products, lisa.avent@disney.com	Don Gross, VP of global promotions, Buena Vista Pictures Marketing, 818-560-7477, don.gross@disney.com	Licensees: McFarlane, Mad Engine, LEGO. Licensing and promo opps: Disney is currently looking for partners across a variety of categories.





FIRST TAKE

Title & Primary Target Audience	Release Date	Story Line (A—animation, L—live action)	Studio & Distributor	Licensing Contact	Promotions Contact	Licensees & Promotional Partners
The Chronicles of Narnia: Voyage of the Dawn Treader						
Family/Boys six to 10	December 10, 2010	(L) Ben Barnes, Skandar Keynes and Georgie Henley reprise their roles as Caspian, Edmund and Lucy in the third installment based on the classic book series by C.S. Lewis. Edmund and Lucy Pevensie, along with their cousin Eustace and their royal friend King Caspian, find themselves swallowed into a painting and on to the Dawn Treader and an incredible adventure of destiny and discovery ensues.	Walden Media/Twentieth Century Fox	Robert Marick, EVP of Fox L&M, 310-369-2207, robert.marick@fox.com	Robert Marick, EVP of Fox L&M, 310-369-2207, robert.marick@fox.com	Licenses: HarperCollins Children's Books (publishing). Licensing and promo opps: The franchise's first licensing program shepherded by Disney did not migrate to mass-market retail. So expect Fox to mount a very targeted, fan-oriented program around the third film.
Yogi Bear						
Family	December 17, 2010	(L/CGI) The film takes from the original TV series and follows the adventures of Yogi Bear and his pal Boo-Boo in Jellystone Park. The park has been losing business so greedy Mayor Brown decides to shut it down and sell the land. That means families will no longer be able to experience the natural beauty of the outdoors. And, even worse, Yogi and Boo-Boo will be tossed out of the only home they've ever known. Faced with his biggest challenge ever, Yogi must prove that he really is smarter than the average bear as he and Boo-Boo join forces with their old nemesis Ranger Smith to find a way to save Jellystone Park from closing forever.	Warner Bros.	Domestic: Karen McTier, EVP, domestic licensing and worldwide marketing, Warner Bros. Consumer Products, 818.954.3008, karen.mctier@warnerbros.com; International: Jordan Solitto, EVP, new initiatives & international licensing, Warner Bros. Consumer Products, 818.954.7807, jordan.solitto@warnerbros.com	Domestic: Karen McTier, EVP, domestic licensing and worldwide marketing, Warner Bros. Consumer Products, 818.954.3008, karen.mctier@warnerbros.com; International: Jordan Solitto, EVP, new initiatives & international licensing, Warner Bros. Consumer Products, 818.954.7807, jordan.solitto@warnerbros.com	Licensing and promo opps: Holiday applications are a high priority.
The Green Hornet						
Family	December 22, 2010	(L) By night, debonair newspaper publisher Britt Reid fights crime as a masked superhero known as The Green Hornet. At his side is martial arts expert Kato. Rogen also penned the screenplay along with writing partner Evan Goldberg who together wrote Superbad and Pineapple Express.	Sony Pictures/Columbia Pictures	Juli Boylan, SVP, Sony Pictures Consumer Products, 310-244-4155, juli_boylan@spesony.com	Mary Goss Robino, SVP of global marketing partnerships, Sony Pictures Consumer Products, 310-244-3999, mary_robinos@spesony.com	Licensing and promo opps: Sony is exploring opportunities in select categories.
Tron						
Family	Holiday 2010	(L) Sam Flynn, rebellious 26-year-old of Kevin Flynn, travels into the mind-blowing TRON universe on a heroic journey to find his missing father and defeat the evil overlord, Clu—learning along the way to accept the responsibility of his remarkable legacy. The cast includes Jeff Bridges, Bruce Boxleitner, Garrett Hedlund, Olivia Wilde, Beau Garrett.	Walt Disney Pictures	Lisa Avent, VP/CGM global franchise development, Disney Consumer Products, lisa.aventi@disney.com	Don Cross, VP of global promotions, Buena Vista Pictures Marketing, 818-560-7477, don.gross@disney.com	Licensing and promo opps: Disney is currently seeking partners in a variety of categories.
Rango						
Family	March 18, 2011	(CGI) Starring Johnny Depp, a chameleon family pet on a hero quest. When his terrarium is dumped out of the family car onto the highway he makes his way to a small town for water. Intimidated by a group of tough townsfolk, he pretends to be an hardened outlaw and his new persona is such a hit that the locals make him the mayor.	Paramount/Industrial Light and Magic	Lynda Cevallos, VP of licensing, 323-956-8626, lynda_cevallos@paramount.com	Chris Cerbo, VP of global promotions, 323-956-8105, chris_cerbo@paramount.com	Licensing and promo opps: Paramount is seeking partners in toy/collectible, video games, publishing and apparel.

Rio						
Kids four to 12	April 8, 2011	(CGI) Blu, a rare macaw who thinks he is the last of his kind discovers one day that there's another macaw—and it's a she. He leaves the comforts of his cage in small town Minnesota and heads to Rio de Janeiro. But it's far from love at first sight for the domesticated and flight-challenged Blu and the fiercely independent, high-flying female, Jewel. Unexpectedly thrown together, they embark on an adventure of a lifetime, where they learn about friendship, love and courage.	Blue Sky Studios/ Twentieth Century Fox	Robert Marick, EVP of Fox L&M, 310-369-2207 robertmarick@fox.com	Robert Marick, EVP of Fox L&M, 310-369-2207 robertmarick@fox.com	Licensing and promo opps: Currently seeking partners across all categories.
Thor						
All Ages	May 6, 2011	(L) Director Kenneth Branagh leads a cast that includes Chris Hemsworth, Natalie Portman, Anthony Hopkins, Renee Russo and Tom Hiddleston in the God of Thunder's big-budget, silver screen debut. This epic adventure spans the Marvel Universe, from present day Earth to the realm of Asgard. At the center of the story is The Mighty Thor, a powerful but arrogant warrior whose reckless actions reignite an ancient war. Thor is cast down to Earth and forced to live among humans as punishment. Once here, Thor learns what it takes to be a true hero when the most dangerous villain of his world sends the darkest forces of Asgard to invade Earth.	Marvel Studios	Domestic: Paul Gitter, president of consumer products, North America, Marvel Entertainment, 212-576-8577, International: Sandrine de Raspede, EVP, Marvel Entertainment International, 44-207-858-2004	Douglas Finberg, EVP, International Marketing, Marvel Studios, 310-550-3100	Licensing and promo opps: Marvel will put together a comprehensive licensing and merchandising program across all core categories to support the production.
The Smurfs						
Family	July 29, 2011	(L/CGI) Get set to hear that familiar refrain, "Is it much farther, Papa Smurf?" as Sony Pictures Animation takes The Smurfs to the big screen. The Smurfs accidentally fall through a magic portal into the modern world, where a comical and smurfy adventure begins and they must avoid capture by the evil wizard Gargamel and his cat Azrael.	Sony Pictures Animation/Columbia Pictures	Juli Boylan, SVP, Sony Pictures Consumer Products, 310-244-4155, juli_boylan@spe.sony.com	Mary Goss Robino, SVP of global marketing partnerships, Sony Pictures Consumer Products, 310-244-3999, mary_robino@spesony.com	Licensees: Jakks Pacific (toys).
Cars 2						
Family	Summer 2011	(CGI) All the world's a racetrack as racing superstar Lightning McQueen zooms back into action with his best friend Mater in tow to take on the globe's fastest and finest in this new thrilling high-octane installment off the Cars saga. Mater and Lightning McQueen will need their passports as they find themselves in a new world of intrigue, thrills, and fast-paced comedic escapades around the world. <i>Cars 2</i> is being directed by Brad Lewis, producer of the Oscar-winning film, <i>Ratatouille</i> . Cast: Owen Wilson as Lightning McQueen, Larry the Cable Guy as Mater.	Walt Disney Pictures	Mary Beech, VP/GM, global studio franchise development, Disney Consumer Products, marybeech@disney.com	Don Gross, VP of global promotions, Buena Vista Pictures Marketing, 818-560-7477, don.gross@disney.com	Licensees: Thinkway Toy, Fisher-Price, Kellogg's, Jay Franco, Hallmark, Mead, Leap Frog Licensing and promo opps: Disney's licensing program is in progress and is promo opportunities are available.
Kung Fu Panda: The Kaboom of Doom						
Family	June 3, 2011	(CGI) Po is now living his dream as The Dragon Warrior, protecting the Valley of Peace alongside his friends and fellow kung fu masters, The Furious Five. But Po's new life of awesomeness is threatened by the emergence of a formidable villain, who plans to use a secret, unstoppable weapon to conquer China and destroy kung fu. It is up to Po and The Furious Five to journey across China to face this threat and vanquish it. He must look to his past and uncover the secrets of his mysterious origins; only then will he be able to unlock the strength he needs to succeed. The returning original all-star cast includes Jack Black, Angelina Jolie and Dustin Hoffman.	DreamWorks Animation	Domestic: Brad Woods, head of licensing and retail marketing, DreamWorks Animation, 818-695-7011; International: Sheila Clarke, head of international consumer products, DreamWorks Animation, 818-695-7542	Theatrical promotions: Linda Kehn, DreamWorks Animation, 818-695-7569; Home video promotions: David Bynder, DreamWorks Animation, 818-695-7031	Licensees: Ape Entertainment, Dalmation Press, Hallmark, Penguin Books, THQ Theatrical and DVD promotional opportunities are available and DreamWorks is seeking additional partners in select categories.

"First Take" is a bi-annual chart of upcoming kids and family movies, detailing their licensing and promotional activities. Questions or materials related to "First Take" should be directed to Lana Castleman at castleman@brunko.com.



FIRST TAKE

Title & Primary Target Audience	Release Date	Story Line (A—animation, L—live action)	Studio & Distributor	Licensing Contact	Promotions Contact	Licensees & Promotional Partners
The First Avenger: Captain America						
All ages	July 22, 2011	(L) In the early days of the Marvel Universe, Steve Rogers volunteers to participate in an experimental program that turns him into the Super Soldier known as Captain America.	Marvel Studios/ Paramount Pictures	Domestic: Paul Gitter, president of consumer products, North America, Marvel Entertainment, 212-576-857; International: Sandrine de Raspede, EVP, Marvel Entertainment International, 44-207-858-2004	Douglas Finberg, EVP, International Marketing, Marvel Studios, 310-550-3100	Licensing and promo opps: Marvel will put together a comprehensive licensing and merchandising program across all core categories to support the production.
Puss in Boots						
Family	November 4, 2011	(CGI) The <i>Shrek</i> spin-off which naturally features the voice work of Antonio Banderas as Puss himself, as well as Salma Hayek, is a prequel. Way before Puss ever met Shrek, our suave and furry feline hero goes on a swashbuckling ride, as he teams with mastermind Humpty Dumpty and the street-savvy Kitty to steal the famed Goose that lays the Golden Eggs.	DreamWorks Animation	Domestic: Brad Woods, head of licensing and retail marketing, DreamWorks Animation, 818-695-7011; International: Sheila Clarke, head of international consumer products, DreamWorks Animation, 818-695-7542	Theatrical promotions: Linda Kohn, DreamWorks Animation, 818-695-7569; Home video promotions: David Byrder, DreamWorks Animation, 818-695-7031	Licensees: Ape Entertainment, Dalmation Press, Hallmark, Penguin Books, THQ; Theatrical and DVD promotional opportunities are available and DreamWorks is seeking additional partners in select categories.
Arthur Christmas						
Family	November 11, 2011	(Stop motion/CGI) Set on Christmas Eve, the story at last reveals the answer to every child's question: How does Santa deliver all those presents in one night? Santa's exhilarating, ultra-high-tech operation is massive. However, even the most high-tech outfits have a margin of error. In this case, one child in six hundred million is missed. Arthur, Santa's misfit youngest son, can't bear it and a crazy rookie mission begins to deliver the last gift before Christmas dawns.	Sony Pictures	Juli Boylan, SVP, Sony Pictures Consumer Products, 310-244-4155, juli_boylan@spesony.com	Mary Goss Robino, SVP of global marketing partnerships, Sony Pictures Consumer Products, 310-244-3999, mary_robino@spesony.com	Licensing and promo opps: Sony is looking for partners in a wide variety of categories.
The Adventures of Tintin: Secret of the Unicorn						
Family	December 23, 2011	(3-D motion capture) Directed by Steven Spielberg, <i>Tintin</i> chronicles the countless adventures of the beloved classic character created by Georges Remi and his dog, a terrier named Snowy, as they travel the world. The movies stars Jamie Bell (Billy Elliot) as Tintin and Daniel Craig as the evil Red Rackham.	Paramount Pictures	Lynda Cevallos, VP of licensing 323-956-8626, lynda_cevallos@paramount.com	Chris Cerbo, director of global promotions, 323-956-8105, chris_cerbo@paramount.com	Licensing and promo opps: Automotive, beverage, beauty, electronics, financial, insurance, QSR, shipping sports, tech, travel, wireless, pets.
The Avengers						
All ages	May 4, 2012	(L) The Avengers will bring together the superhero team of Marvel Comics characters—including Iron Man, Captain America, Thor, the Hulk and more—for the first time ever as they are forced to band together to battle the biggest foe they've ever faced.	Marvel Studios	Domestic: Paul Gitter, president of consumer products, North America, Marvel Entertainment, 212-576-857; International: Sandrine de Raspede, EVP, Marvel Entertainment International, 44-207-858-2004	Douglas Finberg, EVP, International Marketing, Marvel Studios, 310-550-3100	Licensing and promo opps: Marvel will put together a comprehensive licensing and merchandising program across all core categories to support the production.

Also Slated		
I Hop		
Family	March 4, 2011	(LA/CGI) While driving home late one night, an out-of-work slacker runs over the Easter Bunny, voiced by Brit comic Russell Brand. When the bunny can't hop because his leg is broken, the slacker must train to take over the bunny's egg-delivering duties and save Easter.
Bunyan and Babe		
Family	Spring 2011	(CGI) (A) While 12-year-old Travis and his little sister Whitney are visiting their grandparents farm in Minnesota, they find out that an greedy developer wants to raze their small community and run the hard-working residents off their land. Travis is chased into the forest by one of the contractors where he stumbles upon a magic portal to the hidden world where Paul Bunyan has been living in exile for 100 years, ever since the advent of machines left him feeling of little value to the new world. Paul reluctantly escorts Travis back to the farm and upon learning of the developer's sinister plan he and Babe, the blue ox, get wrapped up in a brand new adventure and help Travis and Whitney save the town.
Transformers 3		
All ages	July 1, 2011	(L) After the success of <i>Transformers 2</i> , fans will be expecting a lot from the follow-up. Director Michael Bay and star Shia LaBeouf are set to return. Plot points are in the process of being hammered out, but the pair have promised the third installment will be darker than the first two films.
The Bear and the Bow		
Family	Holiday 2011	(CGI) Scotland is the setting for this Pixar-helmed action-adventure featuring tangle-haired Merida, a princess who would prefer to make her mark as a great archer. Wouldn't you know it, the strong-willed lady unknowingly drives her father's kingdom into peril.
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 5		
Boys	2011	(L) Crime-fighting heroes in a half-shell Leonardo, Michelangelo, Donatello and Raphael return to the big screen in their fifth feature film that explores the origins of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. On board as producers are Scott Mednick (<i>300</i> , <i>10,000 BC</i>) and Galen Walker. Based on the characters created by Laird and Kevin Eastman.
Hong Kong Phooey		
Family	2011	(L/CGI) Based on the 16-ep Hanna-Barbera series that aired in the mid-70s about a superhero dog who travels about the city with cat named Spot in his Phooeymobile, fighting crime with the aid of his manual, <i>The Hong Kong Book Of Kung Fu</i> . Hong Kong Phooey's alter ego, Penny, works as a mild-mannered janitor at police headquarters and is under the constant scrutiny of the Sarge.
Marvin the Martian		
Family	2011	(L/CGI) The film stars Looney Tunes cult favorite, Marvin, who intends to destroy Earth during Christmas, as it is blocking his galactic view. However, Marvin's rival prevents him from doing so by wrapping him inside a gift box.
Wicked		
Tweens	2012	(L) With all the supernatural and romantic flavor of <i>Twilight</i> , a feature film is in the works based on The New York Times' bestselling young adult five-book series that follows the adventures of Holly, a bright young girl whose parents are killed in an accident. Sent to Seattle to live with her aunt and two cousins, Holly soon discovers she has unusual powers and that she's a descendant of powerful witches.

Films in Development	
Di Bonaventura Pictures	The Secrets of the Immortal Nicholas Flamel
DreamWorks	The Croods, Madagascar 3, The Guardians
Paramount Pictures	Lions, Tigers and Bears; Gimme a Call
Twentieth Century Fox	Mr. Popper's Penguins, Tooth Fairy
MGM	Once Upon a Time
Hasbro	Micronauts
Walden Media	The Berenstain Bears
Warner Bros.	Happy Feet Sequel
Ghost House Pictures	The Substitute
Peace Arch Entertainment	Milton's Secret: An Adventure of Discovery through Then, When, and the Power Of Now

The background of the entire page is a close-up, high-contrast photograph of water ripples. The water is a deep blue color, and the ripples create a series of concentric, swirling patterns that catch the light, giving it a shimmering, textured appearance. The ripples originate from the right side of the frame and spread outwards.

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If you're an animator in India, you're probably feeling pretty good about your future these days. And why not? By most accounts, the Indian animation market's growth, as forecasted by many industry sources, has been steady and seems poised to remain so.

In fact, according to 2008/2009 stats released by the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM), the market is pegged to grow by 22% a year and hit US\$1 billion by 2012. This seems a feasible projection for a sector that has already gone from US\$314 million in 2006 to US\$494 million in 2008.

In lockstep with the market expansion, production budgets have also ballooned over the last few years. The pricetag on animated features made in India rose from US\$1.7 million to US\$6.7 million from '06 to '08, while international toon projects outsourced to the region are up from US\$8.8 million to US\$11.1 million.

The burgeoning Indian market just makes good sense for potential partners. Along with a significant cost advantage that stems from lower wages paid there, India also offers a large pool of English-speaking animation industry professionals. Add to this a booming domestic entertainment industry and a glut of well-equipped animation studios, and it's easy to see why the sector is experiencing such exponential growth. With an eye on all of this success, more and more Indian software companies are turning to animation, and new animation schools are cropping up just as quickly to keep up with the market's voracious appetite for skilled graduates.

But it is worth noting that India's top animation players are not unchallenged in their quest for success. They've got more competition to contend with than ever before, and the global economic downturn has had an impact on the market landscape. To wit, NASSCOM's 2012 forecast was recently revised from US\$1.16 billion to US\$1 billion primarily for this reason, although other contributing factors include a scanty domestic appetite for animated features and a relatively low output of original content, which everyone generally agrees is the next step up the value chain for maturing Indian animation companies looking to break out of the labor-intensive, service-dependent business model.

It also doesn't help that the Indian government is viewed as an unwilling benefactor. Tapaas Chakravarti, CEO at DQ Entertainment, says that while his company (a giant in India and globally) is unaffected because of its ability to raise its own financing, smaller companies in India have a hard go of it due to the lack of funding or subsidies for the domestic market. Toonz Animation CEO P. Jayakumar agrees, and adds that shrinking broadcast license fees in India have also had a financial impact on India's players.

But despite these hiccups and challenges, animation studios in India remain positive about the future. A shift is already underway, with many companies moving from a strictly service business model towards co-production and even original content creation. The co-production model enables Indian companies to graduate to the next step—access and exposure to international markets, introduction to new distribution channels and technology, and a share in profits. Original content creation, meanwhile, offers a chance to shine on the world stage as competitively creative and technologically savvy.



DQ Entertainment International
 # +91 40 23553726 / 27
 Email: sales@dqentertainment.com
www.dqentertainment.com

Contact: TV Sales, Home Entertainment, Publishing,
 Merchandising, Licensing & Co-production

Manoj Mishra
 V.P. Sales & Licencing
manojmishra@dqentertainment.com
 Ph: +91 9246395804

Sumedha Saraogi
 V.P. Business Development
sumedha@dqentertainment.com
 Ph: +91 9246364434

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DQ Entertainment brings iconic brands to life

And that's exactly where Hyderabad, India-based DQ Entertainment is headed. Founded in 2000, the animation juggernaut has grown over the last decade from 150 to more than 3,500 employees spread out over India, the Philippines, Ireland, France, the US and Japan. With three major divisions covering animation, gaming and global IP, the company has even set up an animation school to ensure it has a fresh pool of talent to draw from anytime the need arises.

At its inception, DQ was a fee-for-hire studio working for clients such as Disney and Nickelodeon. It has since evolved, joining its clients in co-production partnerships. "People started to come to us for 'cheap' animation, and I hated that," Charkavarti remembers of the early years. "So we started to be more selective [with our projects]."

And it chose wisely. Over the years, the studio has brought its animation prowess to bear on Disney's CGI preschool offering *Mickey Mouse Clubhouse*, and for Nick on fast-paced action laugher *Tak the Power of Juju*, CGI buddy comedy *Fanboy and Chum Chum* and *Penguins of Madagascar*, based on the DreamWorks feature franchise. "It's all about trust," says Chakravarti of his blue-chip partners. "They know we'll deliver on time. And once negotiations are over, we won't go back to them for money, even if we have to take a loss. When resources are tight and we need, say, 100 people in a week, we can raise [the necessary number] of animators within the company in that time. We've met that challenge many times before."

DQ's flexibility and top-notch delivery record continues to serve the company well, elevating it to global entertainment giant status with ownership stakes in and co-production rights to iconic titles such as *Iron Man* (with Marvel, Method Animation and Lux Animation), *Casper's Scare School* (with Mooncoop, Harvey Entertainment and Classic Media) and, most recently, Disney's *Jungle Book*, a CGI series

and home entertainment double-hit set for delivery in June 2010 (with Disney, Universal Home Video, Mooncoop, ZDF and TF1).

As part of a growth strategy to work exclusively with iconic brands such as *Jungle Book*, DQ has also been busy animating Classic Media's *Lassie* as a 26 x 22-minute series. For the first time ever, the famous pooch is getting a CGI treatment, and with that, will gain the ability to speak. Going the other way, the studio is currently producing a series of six-minute animated shorts centering around Charlie Chaplin. In color but with no sound (in keeping with the brand's pre-talkie roots), the project is a collaboration with French companies Method Animation and MK2.

It's been busy at home for DQ, too. On the content development front, while the studio has traditionally eschewed domestic fare in favor of working on internationally sourced projects, it recently waded into these waters with *Balkand* (a 70-minute CGI TV movie about a poor prince revered as a god) and *Ravan*, based around a demon king from Hindu history. While these feature-length titles were aimed squarely at the six to nine crowd, they rated well with viewers across the demographic spectrum, indicating a strong appetite for content stemming from Indian culture—animated or not. And Cartoon Network India was pleased enough with *Balkand*'s performance to order two more movies.

Meanwhile, Disney has contracted DQ for a home-grown detective TV movie for preteens—"think Sherlock Holmes meets Tintin," says Chakravarti—slated for April 2010. The pic will blend animation with live action.

DQ Entertainment's steady service record has led to co-production deals with some of the industry's highest-profile players, including Marvel (for *Iron Man*, left) and Disney (on *Tara Duncan* and *Jungle Book*, top and bottom right respectively)



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For Further info Contact: Mr. R.V. Sudhakar (CEO), Mobile: +91- 98661 16609, e-mail: sudhakar@rvml.co.in, Mr. R.V. Sashank (Producer), Mobile: +91-99080 83333, +63-90-8886-6999, e-mail : sashank@rvml.co.in
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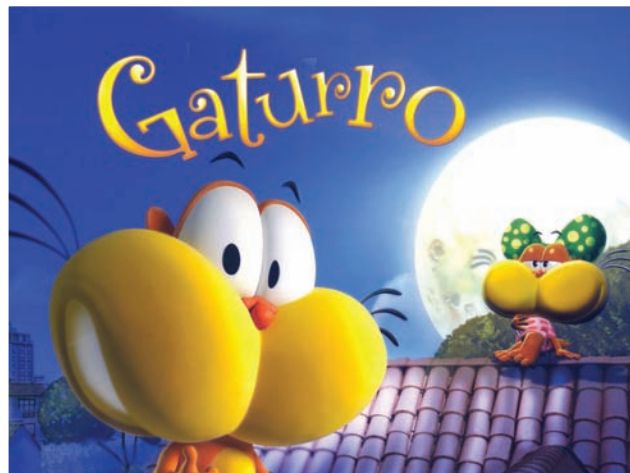
Unlike DQ, Toonz Animation jumped into the independent production world shortly after its inception in 1999. "Two years after setting up base in Trivandrum, we realized that the real business was not in outsourcing but in co-producing and owning IPs. This resulted in the making of *The Adventures of Tenali Raman*, India's first animated TV series, and *Hanuman*, India's first animated feature film," recalls Jayakumar.

Both were highly successful in India and internationally. *The Adventures of Tenali Raman* was broadcast across Asia on Cartoon Network and distributed worldwide by Indigo Kids in the UK. And *Hanuman* aired in India and neighboring countries via Sony platforms, with global distribution handled by Mumbai-based Rajshri Films. "Being the first of their kind, much hype and hullabaloo was created during the launch of both. *Tenali Raman* is loved by many, due to its distinctive Indian flavor, and still runs on Cartoon Network [today]," says Jayakumar.

Founded over morning tea in Beverly Hills in 1999, the company started out modestly with 200 employees serving a work-for-hire model. But it has since grown into a US\$14-million animation powerhouse, occupying a state-of-the-art, 18,000-square-foot production facility in the IT, communications and entertainment super-hub of Technopark in Trivandrum. A one-stop shop, Toonz Animation offers its worldwide clientele end-to-end animation services, including 2-D and 3-D animation (digital and traditional), Flash, stop-motion and visual effects.

Toonz has also diversified its slate with co-productions to own more of the work that runs through its studio. Recent series projects that fit this bill include *Wolverine and The X-Men* (with Marvel), *Freefonix* (with CBBC), *Legends of the Ring of Fire* (with Disney), *Finlay the Fire Engine* (with Hallmark Entertainment) and *Mostly Ghostly* (with Universal).

Known for its international production systems, cutting-edge infrastructure and cost-effective budgeting (a boon for far-flung clients), Toonz is also currently co-producing a slate of CGI feature films including *The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus* (with Gang of 7 Animation and Hyde Park Entertainment in the US), *Gaturro* (with Argentina's Illusion Studios) and *Twinergy*, a vehicle for Bollywood star Amitabh Bachchan (with India's ABCL Corporation).



Toonz Animation's current slate is heavy on CGI features such as *Gaturro* (top) and *The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus* (bottom)



RipplFX is connecting Indian creative talent with international content partners to feed its much-anticipated web portal with series like Beati's *The Maybees* (left) and *Max on Snax* (right)

RipplFX: From ripples to waves

Even with India's cost-effective, IT-enabled and creatively energized animation industry firmly in the sights of Hollywood and the global heavyweights, there are still plenty of opportunities for smaller companies to get in on the action.

Enter RipplFX, a self-described "360-degree producer, distributor and agent in the kids business" that really understands the advantages of partnering up with some of India's most creative minds. As such, the company has aligned with local animation firms and media partners including Blowfish FX, Graphiti Multimedia, Envision Creations and independent film company ANKK Media.

Founded State-side by CEO Nicole Lundeen and COO/CTO Anshuman Mookerjee in 2007, RipplFX may be a relatively young company, but the expertise behind its business runs deep. Between them, Lundeen and Mookerjee boast 25 years working with and developing kids brands. And with ex-Henson exec Matt Webb on-board as SVP of Marketing, and Richard Lewis as VP of Business Development in the US, RipplFX is already making more than just a ripple in the animation market.

Acting as producer, distributor, agent and licensor, RipplFX has its hands in everything, and is able to acquire, produce and deliver content in multiple formats to traditional and new media channels. Explains Lundeen, "Being [just] a co-production partner, and there are many, you lose a lot of power when you're going for distribution. In our business model, we believe it makes more sense to be able to do both; that way, we can manage the distribution and make sure the content gets out there on a variety of platforms."

At the forefront of the company's distribution network is the much-anticipated RipplKidz subscription web portal, which is on schedule to launch this year and will offer a wide array of engaging and entertaining content for children, while acting as a virtual "classroom assistant" for teachers and parents through its edutainment properties.

Children will be able to download content, play games, chat with friends, create their own short animations, and learn tips and tricks from award-winning animators around the world. "We want to create an environment that is diverse, fun, entertaining and always fresh," says Marketing SVP Matt Webb.

One area RipplFX has targeted in particular is the health and wellness sector, whose recent growth has created a vigorous demand for content. In response,





RipplFX is positioning itself to meet a growing demand for health and wellness kids programming like Beati's *Sunny Pepper* series

RipplFX recently struck up a long-term relationship with Dr. Elson Haas, a popular author of eight books and creator of the Anatomix Comix songbook and sing-along CD with the aim of teaching children about their bodies. RipplFX is currently developing a web-based pilot project based on the Anatomix Comix brand, and hopes to expand it through the RipplKidz web portal. In addition, Dr. Haas' own

animated alter ego, Dr. Sun, will host a regular feature called "Ask Dr. Sun" on the RipplKidz portal.

RipplFX has also hooked up with US-based Beati Productions as a co-producer and distributor on *Max on Snax*, a series that promotes health and nutrition to the preschool demo, as well as the studio's *The Maybees* and *Sunny Pepper* projects.

As if the RipplKidz launch and promoting a healthier lifestyle to children through entertainment wasn't enough to keep its team busy, the company is working with the Children's Film Society of India (CFSI) on a long-term partnership to market and distribute content, increase the organization's profile and help bolster its revenue streams. Because CFSI has one of the largest libraries of children's content in India, the partnership just made sense. "They have a lot of wonderful, award-winning films that are just sitting in cans and in need of different venues for distribution, so we'll be working with them on that," says Lundeen.

In development, RipplFX is focusing its talents on a number of 2-D animated properties, including a Beatles parody with a twist. *Meet the Brittles in Monstermania* is a celebrated children's picture book by Hal Pollock in which a group of monster musicians live through their own iteration of the Fab Four's meteoric rise to fame. RipplFX is currently adapting the property into a series for broadcast and online distribution.

With 2010 well underway, RipplFX has its production plate full, but according to Lundeen, the company isn't slowing down. "We're actively looking for children's short films—live-action, animation, puppetry and stop-motion—that are 30 seconds, five minutes or 11 minutes in length for licensing and distribution." ●

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Contact us:

DELHI

Anirban Chatterjee/ Neetu Sikka

FICCI Entertainment Division

Tel- 011-23766929/ 23316527 (D)

23738760-70 (B) Extn. 386

Email: anirban@ficci.com,

neetu.sikka@ficci.com

MUMBAI

Ms.Mansi Bansal

FICCI Entertainment Division

Tel: + 91 11 24968000

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New York International Gift Fair	Jan. 30-Feb. 4	New York, NY	212-216-2000	www.nyigf.com	Toys/Games
Nuremberg Toy Fair	Feb. 4-9	Nuremberg, Germany	49-91-1998-1316	www.nurembergtoyfair.com	Toys/Merch
KidScreen Summit	Feb. 10-12	New York, NY	416-408-2300 (Canada)	www.kidscreensummit.com	EVERYTHING KIDS!
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International Halloween, Costume & Party Show	Feb. 26-Mar. 1	Chicago, IL	800-323-5462	www.transworldexhibits.com	App/Lic/Merch
Cartoon Movie	Mar. 3-5	Lyon, France	32-2-242-93-43	www.cartoon-media.be	Anim/Film
Brand Licensing Central	Mar. 8-10	Budapest, Hungary	44-208-956-2663 (UK)	www.advanstar.com	Lic/Merch
Game Developers Conference	Mar. 9-13	San Francisco, CA	415-947-6000	www.gdconf.com	Inter/Games
Licensing Forum Central & Eastern Europe	Mar. 11-12	Budapest, Hungary	212-627-5838 (US)	www.licensingforum.com	Lic/Merch
Bologna Children's Book Fair	Mar. 23-25	Bologna, Italy	39-051-282-111	www.bookfair.bolognafiere.it	Pub/Lic
Kids Licensing Forum	Mar. 23-25	Bologna, Italy	39-051-282-361	www.kidslicensingforum.com	Pub/Lic/Merch
Tokyo International Anime Fair	Mar. 25-28	Tokyo, Japan	81-3-5320-4786	www.tokyoanime.jp/en	Animation
WonderCon	Apr. 2-4	San Francisco, CA	619-491-2475	www.comic-con.org/wc	Publishing
NAB Show	Apr. 10-15	Las Vegas, NV	301-682-7962	www.nabshow.com	TV/MM
MIPTV	Apr. 12-16	Cannes, France	33-1-4190-4400	www.miptv.com	TV/Prod/Dist/Prog
Cartoons on the Bay	Apr. 15-18	Portofino, Italy	39-06-37-498-315	www.cartoonsbay.com	Anim/TV
Sprockets International Film Festival for Children	Apr. 17-23	Toronto, Canada	416-934-3200	www.sprockets.ca	Film
London Book Fair	Apr. 19-21	London, England	44-208-271-2124	www.londonbookfair.co.uk	Publishing
ToyCon	May 5-7	Scottsdale, AZ	212-675-1141	www.toyassociation.org	Toys/Merch
Youth Marketing Mega Event	May 10-12	Chicago, IL	888-670-8200	www.iirusa.com/youth	Marketing
INplay 2010	May 18-19	Toronto, Canada	416-516-0077	www.inplay2010.com	Inter/Games/MM
BookExpo America	May 25-27	New York, NY	800-840-5614	www.bookexpoamerica.com	Publishing
Prix Jeunesse	May 28-June 2	Munich, Germany	49-89-5900-2058	www.prixjeunesse.de	Anim/Film
Banff World Television Festival	June 7-10	Banff, Canada	403-678-9260	www.bwtfv.com	TV
Annecy	June 7-12	Annecy, France	33-4-5010-0900	www.annecy.org	Animation
Licensing International Expo	June 8-10	Las Vegas, NV	203-882-1300	www.licensingexpo.com	Lic/Merch
World Summit on Media for Children & Youth	June 14-18	Karlstad, Sweden		www.wskarlstad2010.se	TV/Prod/Prog
E3 Expo 2010	June 15-17	Los Angeles, CA	805-654-0171	www.e3expo.com	Inter/Games
DISCOP East	June 22-24	Budapest, Hungary	33-1-4229-3224 (France)	www.discop	TV/Prod/Prog/Dist
PromaxBDA: The Conference 2010	June 22-24	Los Angeles, CA	310-788-7600	www.promaxbda.org	TV/Mktg
ASTRA Marketplace	June 27-30	Providence, RI	312-222-0984	www.astratoy.org	Toys/Merch
Christian Retail Show	June 27-30	St. Louis, MO	719-265-9895	www.christianretailshow.com	Lic/Merch
Tokyo Toy Show	July 15-18	Tokyo, Japan	81-3-3829-2513	www.toys.or.jp	Toys/Games
Comic-Con International	July 22-25	San Diego, CA	619-491-2475	www.comic-con.org	Pub/Mktg/Promo
SIGGRAPH 2010	July 26-30	Los Angeles, CA	312-321-6830	www.siggraph.org	Inter/Anim/MM
Cartoon Forum	Sep. 14-17	Sopron, Hungary	32-2-242-9343	www.cartoon-media.be	Anim/Film
Brand Licensing Europe	Sep. 29-30	London, England	44-208-956-2661	www.brandlicensing.eu	Lic/Merch
MIPCOM Junior	Oct. 2-3	Cannes, France	33-1-4190-4400	www.mipcomjunior.com	TV/Prod/Prog/Dist
MIPCOM	Oct. 4-8	Cannes, France	33-1-4190-4400	www.mipcom.com	TV/Prod/Prog/Dist
New York Comic-Con	Oct. 8-10	New York, NY	203-840-5321	www.newyorkcomiccon.com	Publishing
Cinekid Festival	Oct. 20-29	Amsterdam, The Netherlands	31-20-531-7890	www.cinekid.nl	Film

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Activision Blizzard (Los Angeles, California, 310-255-2000): Putting his knowledge of the kids industry to good use in the gaming world, **Kenny Davis** has moved from Spin Master to the gameco as marketing director in the owned business unit. At the toyco, he served as senior brand manager, helping to launch boys powerhouse property Bakugan. His new role at Activision will see him specializing in ideation and innovation for classic kids titles.

BBC Worldwide (London, England, 44-208-433-3506): As the commercial arm of the Beeb looks to strengthen its programming output across its localized channels, **John Taite** has been upped to VP of programming for EMEA. Taite steps up from his previous role as director of programming. Since joining BBC Worldwide Channels in September 2007, Taite has supervised the creation of a dozen fully localized channels in the region. He'll be taking editorial control for all BBC-branded channels across EMEA and leading an expanded team of schedulers, media planners and presentation planners. BBCW Channels is also looking to appoint heads of scheduling for Poland, Africa and the Nordic region in the coming months.

Meanwhile, **Otto Leong** has been tapped as director of distribution and business development for CBeebies, BBC Entertainment, BBC Knowledge, BBC Lifestyle and BBC World News in Taiwan and China. He'll be based in Hong Kong and comes to BBCW with more than 20 years of experience in media and entertainment program distribution.

CCI Entertainment (Toronto, Canada, 416-583-2923): **Kristin Lecour** has been upped to director of licensing and marketing at the Canuck prodco. Lecour came to the company in 2006, to work on its marketing and licensing businesses by liaising with partners

and coordinating global projects. She'll now be focusing on building CCI's properties, including GeoFreakZ and Harry and His Bucket Full of Dinosaurs.

Cookie Jar Entertainment (Los Angeles, California, 818-955-5400): **Brenda Bisner** is taking on an expanded role at the State-side office of Cookie Jar with a promotion to director of licensing. Bisner's new responsibilities will see her working for SVP of digital content and distribution **Jim McGowan** to secure home entertainment partners and other licensees in categories such as home décor and toys for Cookie Jar's IP portfolio, which includes Johnny Test, Inspector Gadget, Harlem Globetrotters and Lucha Libre. She'll also be on the lookout for global interactive deals with developers and manufacturers of console games.

DC Thomson (Dundee, Scotland, 44-38-222-3131): **Tim Collins** is the newest member of the executive team at this UK publisher. As head of commercial development for children's entertainment, Collins' responsibilities include wider development of the company's IPs, increasing income and generating greater commercial returns on existing and future titles, as well as third-party properties. Collins will also be managing the licensing, TV, syndication and digital project teams, working closely with them to ID and exploit opportunities. Collins comes to DC Thomson with a background in entertainment marketing, having worked at Universal Studios, DreamWorks, HIT Entertainment and Endemol.

DHX Media (Toronto, Canada, 416-363-8034): Looking to spearhead sales activity in Asia and Latin America, DHX has brought on former Breakthrough Entertainment sales exec **Craig McGillivray** as territory manager for Asia, Japan and Latin America. **Anthony Jiwa** will be stepping into

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a new role as director of marketing at Decode Enterprises, where he'll be working across all DHX Media's production output and distribution library. Based in the Vancouver office, Jiwa previously handled marketing at DHX subsidiary Studio B Productions. At the Toronto office, **Anne Loi** has been upped to SVP of finance operations for DHX Media. She held the same post at Decode and will continue to oversee Decode Interactive.

Disney Media Networks (Los Angeles, California, 818-560-3173):

Todd Dubester has been promoted to VP of global distribution strategy and business development Disney Media Networks. He'll be looking after the department that serves as the division's resource in handling international, syndicated, digital and affiliate distribution of the House of Mouse's entertainment and news content. Dubester and his team will be heading up initiatives to leverage growth opportunities, and he'll also manage business operation and identify and evaluate new distribution channels, platforms, technologies and business models.

Hasbro (Pawtucket, Rhode Island, 401-727-5000): On the heels of scooping up a 10-year master toy license for Sesame Street, the playthings giant has brought in **Jerry Perez** to oversee its preschool division as SVP and global brand leader. In the new role, Perez is taking the reins on worldwide strategy, marketing and merchandising for Hasbro's preschool brand portfolio, which includes PlaySkool, Mr. Potato Head and Play-Doh. He has more than 25 years experience in the toy biz, most recently at Learning Curve, and before that as president of LeapFrog from 2004 to 2007.

The Jim Henson Company (Los Angeles, California, 323-802-1500):

A long-term agreement with **Halle Stanford** will see the SVP of children's entertainment at Henson stepping up to EVP. As an exec with TJHC since 1995, Stanford has been leading the creative and production teams for *Sid the Science Kid* and *Dinosaur Train*. Her leadership role will see her continuing to helm development and production of all preschool and children's programming for TV, direct-to-video and internet productions in animation and live-action formats.

Kidz Entertainment/EEMC (Copenhagen, Denmark, 453-355-6100):

The licensing agency has announced a series of staff changes that went into effect at the beginning of the new year. **Gabriel Sturm**, former VP of sales for the Nordic region, has left the company and is moving with his wife to Hong Kong to work for Top Toy Group. Meanwhile, senior brand manager **Karina Munkholm Graversen** is stepping up to fill the vacated position. Kidz also has two new additions to its team. **Annalisa Woods** joins the company as brand manager, bringing a wealth of experience from her previous role at publisher HarperCollins. And **Peter Schnohr** has signed on as brand and retail consultant. He'll be working with both the brand marketing and creative teams. Schnohr brings eight years of experience with Hasbro Nordic, including five years as sales director.

marblemedia (Toronto, Canada, 416-646-2711): As the prodco's new creative director, **Johnny Kalangis** will be taking the lead on the interactive design process. He'll focus on storytelling across all platforms, working with the sales team to integrate new business opps and spearhead a number of creative online projects in the interactive division. He's also tasked with building and maintaining relationships with broadcasters, portals, publishers, distributors and other partners. Right now, his current projects include crafting online apps for series *Skatoony*, *Stoked* and *Just Like Mom...and Dad*. He comes to marblemedia from Canuck pubcaster the CBC, where he was in charge of online original programming and produced web projects for series like *The Mercer Report*, *Doctor Who* and *Being Erica*.

MTV Networks International (London, England, 44-207-478-6516):

Indra Suharjono has been bumped up to the newly created position of EVP and MD for MTVN North and Southeast Asia. Suharjono will continue to be based in Singapore, and in her expanded role adds the oversight of activities in Japan and Korea to her current remit. As EVP and MD for Southeast Asia and Greater China, Suharjono was executive producer of the first original instalment of the MTV World Stage global franchise, created the first pan-regional programming platform showcasing original Chinese animation on Nick Asia, launched a Chinese-language SpongeBob SquarePants website, attracted new advertisers, (including the Philippines' Department of Tourism and Sunway Resorts), and expanded NVCP into Thailand and Malaysia.

RDF Rights (London, England, 44-207-013-4000):

This division of RDF Media Group has appointed **Mark Watson** as director of consumer products for its kids and family business. Watson joins RDF after a stint as UK licensing director at Twentieth Century Fox Licensing & Merchandising, where he was responsible for developing key brands such as *The Simpsons*. He's also worked at toyco Character UK as sales and licensing director, helping to build the company and establishing new business with key UK retailers.

THQ (Agoura Hills, California, 818-871-5000):

After three years of creating merch partnerships for Capcom's interactive franchises, **Germaine Gioia** has returned to THQ as SVP of licensing and merchandising. As SVP of licensing at Capcom, Gioia secured a number of L&M deals to produce licensed games across multiple platforms. Prior to that, she spent 14 years at THQ, heading up the company's in-bound licensing efforts.

Toei Animation Europe (Paris, France, 33-1-7500-1550):

Toei Animation's Europe office has a new VP in **Ryuji Kochi**, who'll be moving to the company's Paris office. Kochi is now responsible for developing new business across EMEA. He began his career at Toei's Tokyo HQ in 2000, handling L&M activity for its properties, and he has also worked in the company's Hong Kong office.



Encounters of the Air Hogs kind

The motion-control movement that's making Microsoft's Project Natal such a hot topic is heading down the toy aisle this spring as Spin Master preps the latest incarnation of its popular Air Hogs line. Vectron Wave is a mini UFO that can fly sans remote-control—with the wave of a hand or other object to guide it. Equipped with an automatic level sensor, the Vectron Wave will alter its height to hover above any objects it's near.

Sing along with Sing-a-Majigs
You've surely seen singing plush, especially around the holidays. But Fisher-Price's cute and zany Sing-a-Majigs take the tunes one fun step further. Squeeze their tummies and they'll break into song, mouths opening wide to hit the high notes, and give you a glimpse of their little teeth—put all four together and they'll sing in harmony. The initial group will hit retail in May, with two more characters set to arrive this fall.



Lifeboat to Mars: ready for take-off

As part of US pubcaster PBS's effort to bolster its STEM-based offerings (science, technology, engineering, math), it has launched new iGame *Lifeboat to Mars* on PBSKidsGo.org/lifeboat. In partnership with Red Hill Studios, and funded by the National Science Foundation, the game is set in 2041 when a microbe-carrying lifeboat bound for the red planet explodes—kids are tasked with rebuilding the ecosystem in time to save the mission.

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